

TOURING LIBYA

The Western Provinces

PHILIP WARD

Leptis Magna, Tripoli and Sabratha were the 'three cities' of ancient times and today, though the first and the last are in ruins and Tripoli itself is a busy modern metropolis, they still combine to offer a unique and unforgettable glimpse of the struggles and influences of Libya's past. Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Spaniards, Turks and Italians have all left their mark there. Less well-known, and hitherto uncharted in modern guide books, are Beni Walid, Ghadames, Zliten, Farwa and Janawan; but they are some of the loveliest places within a few hours of Europe.

Here, happily within the sterling area and therefore not subject to currency restrictions, is an adventure which caters for all tastes with sun, sea, night-life in Tripoli, solitude in the desert, Roman cities, Arab markets, easy roads, modern shops and hotels. Philip Ward has lived and travelled in Tripolitania for four years and the advice, information and commentary he gives in this guide book are invaluable.



A Merchant in Tripoli's Old City

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PHILIP WARD

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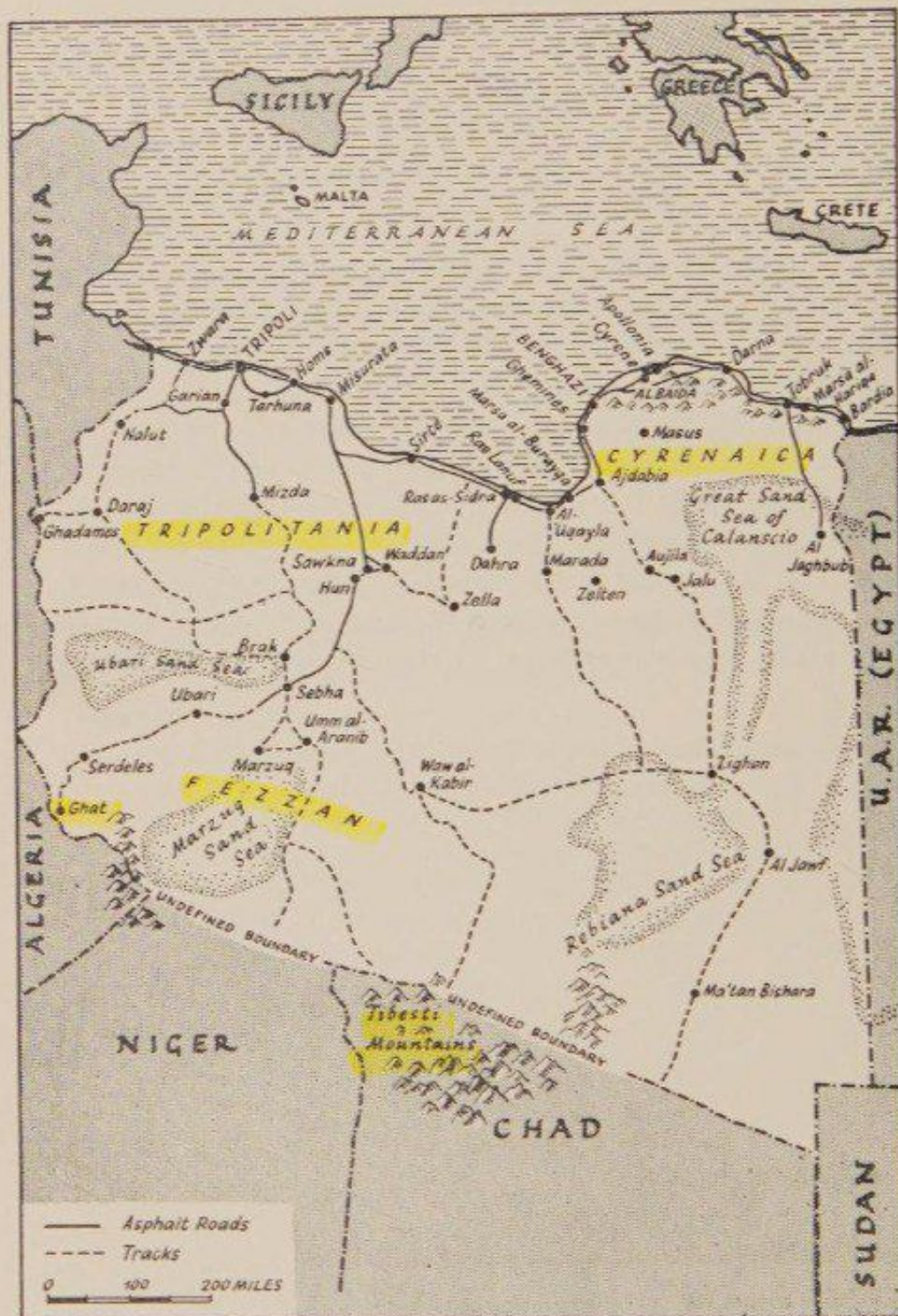
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PREFACE

In writing this guidebook, the result of three years' travel, I have stressed the least-known pleasures of Tripolitania, such as Beni Walid, Farwa, Nalut and Zliten, at the expense of the antiquities already excellently documented by D. E. L. Haynes. Data and figures given are generally those effective in April 1967. I hope the reader will enjoy Tripolitania and its people as much as my wife and I have done. Acknowledgments are due not only to her, my constant companion and willing secretary, who also contributed to the chapters on Farwa and the Western Mountains, but also to our many Libyan friends who have made our life in Tripoli so pleasant. To them this guide is dedicated.

PHILIP WARD



Road map of the Kingdom of Libya

INTRODUCTION

Tripolitania is the historical name for what are now known as the Western provinces of the Kingdom of Libya. Libya's boundaries, in a clockwise direction from the north, are the Mediterranean Sea, the United Arab Republic, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Algeria and Tunisia. Libya has an area of some 680,000 square miles, of which Tripolitania covers about 136,000. But, though this area is considerably smaller than that of the Fezzan (about 213,000 square miles), and insignificant in comparison with that of Cyrenaica (330,000), it is Tripolitania's population which is the largest in Libya—nearly 1,000,000 as opposed to 350,000 in Cyrenaica and 72,000 in Fezzan.

Such a population density—about one to the square kilometre—gives the holiday-maker the sensation of spaciousness immediately he steps off the aeroplane, or sees from the air the glistening white city of Tripoli suddenly curtailed by the vastness of pre-desert to the south. Silence—an amenity long vanished from American and European cities—becomes tangible in this environment. The fine roads, which never experience a traffic jam even in Tripoli, become deserted within ten or twelve kilometres from the city centre. At the same time, the pleasure-seeker can gamble in a casino, benefit from the many club amenities, or laze on the beaches. Libya is building more hotels and improving facilities for the foreign tourist who seeks something out of the ordinary; the new Kingdom of Libya Airlines brings you here, and with the help of this guidebook, the rest is up to you.

INTRODUCTION

An Historical Note

A summary history of Libya is essential for the understanding of the 'Severan age', the 'Turkish period', and all the other terms which indicate chronology throughout this guide.

Man has occupied Tripolitania since at least the Lower Palaeolithic Age. Scholars are constantly finding new evidence to pre-date existing hypotheses: your best approach is to visit the Prehistory Museum and the relevant section of the Natural History Museum in Tripoli Castle (open daily throughout the year).

The Phoenicians from Lebanon and Syria began to colonize the area we know today as Tripolitania about the sixth century B.C. and found a 'Berber' population which was not, however, the Berber people that we find in the Western Mountains today. It was the Phoenician merchants who founded the emporia of Leptis Magna, Oea (the modern Tripoli), and Sabratha, and they who began to trade through the Sahara for slaves, wild beasts, ivory and gold. They were also skilful agriculturalists; it is believed that they introduced the olive, so well suited to the local climate, into the area.

The Romans first allied themselves with the rulers of Leptis in 111 B.C. L. Cornelius Balbus led a successful expedition to Fezzan in 20 B.C., capturing Garama, the capital of the Garamantes (now Jarma) and Cydamus (now Ghadames) which became an allied city of Tripoli (the Roman Oea) at that time.

The *limes Tripolitanus* was established during the Severan age (A.D. 193-235). It consisted of an inner zone of defence formed by a road running from Gabes in modern Tunisia to Leptis, an intermediate zone of fortified farms owned by Libyan veterans pensioned off by the Roman army, and three outlying forts on the main desert routes: Cydamus at the west, Al-Qaryat al-Gharbia in the centre, and Bu Njim on the east. Although all these forts were built and garrisoned by the Third

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Augustan Legion they were not erected contemporaneously; Bu Njim being the first and Al-Qaryat the last.

Genseric invaded with his Vandals in 439. The Byzantine period in Tripolitania began with Belisarius' North African expedition against the occupying Vandals in 533. Procopius is scathing about Byzantine rule, since of the 632 African bishoprics, Tripolitania possessed only four; Sabratha, Oea, Leptis, and Cydamus. The first Arab legions swept through the region in 643.

As Sabratha and Leptis declined, so Misurata and Madinat as-Sultan (near Sirte) flourished. The Normans invaded in 1147.

The next invaders were the Spaniards, who took Tripoli in 1510 as part of the campaign against the Moors after their expulsion from Spain a few years earlier. The position of Tripoli became insecure, however, with the depredations of the Barbary Corsairs, and Spain ceded Tripoli to the Knights of St. John in 1530.

The Turks began to rule Tripoli in 1551, when Admiral Darghut Pasha seized it for Sulaiman the Magnificent. Like Tunisia and Algeria, Tripolitania stayed under Turkish domination from then until modern times.

A cardinal event in Libyan history occurred in 1837, when Sayid Muhammad Ali as-Sanusi, grandfather of H.M. King Idris I, founded the Sanusi religious order, whose aims were to instil regard for, and knowledge of, the true nature of Islam, and to persuade the Saharan people to revert to the tenets and practice of the early Muslims. This great religious movement also helped to incite nationalist aspirations among the Libyan people.

The Turkish régime collapsed in 1911, to be followed by Italian colonial rule. It has been estimated by Khadduri that some 20,000 Italian troops (mainly Eritreans) occupied the main coastal towns in the mid-1920's, but their control did not extend

INTRODUCTION

to the desert, nor to the **Jabal al-Akhdar**, where the Sanusi built up powerful resistance. The great freedom-fighter and patriot 'Umar al-Mukhtar led guerrillas that harassed the Italian troops for many years. An old man, he was captured and executed in September 1931.

Libyan patriotic resistance was then forced to operate from outside Libya, notably in Damascus, where Sa'dawi and Shinnib led a Tripolitanian-Cyrenaican Defence Committee, and in Cairo, though of course many nationalist cells undermined the Italian régime.

The Libyan Army was founded in Cairo in 1940, and fought courageously by the side of Allied troops in the North African Campaign of World War II.

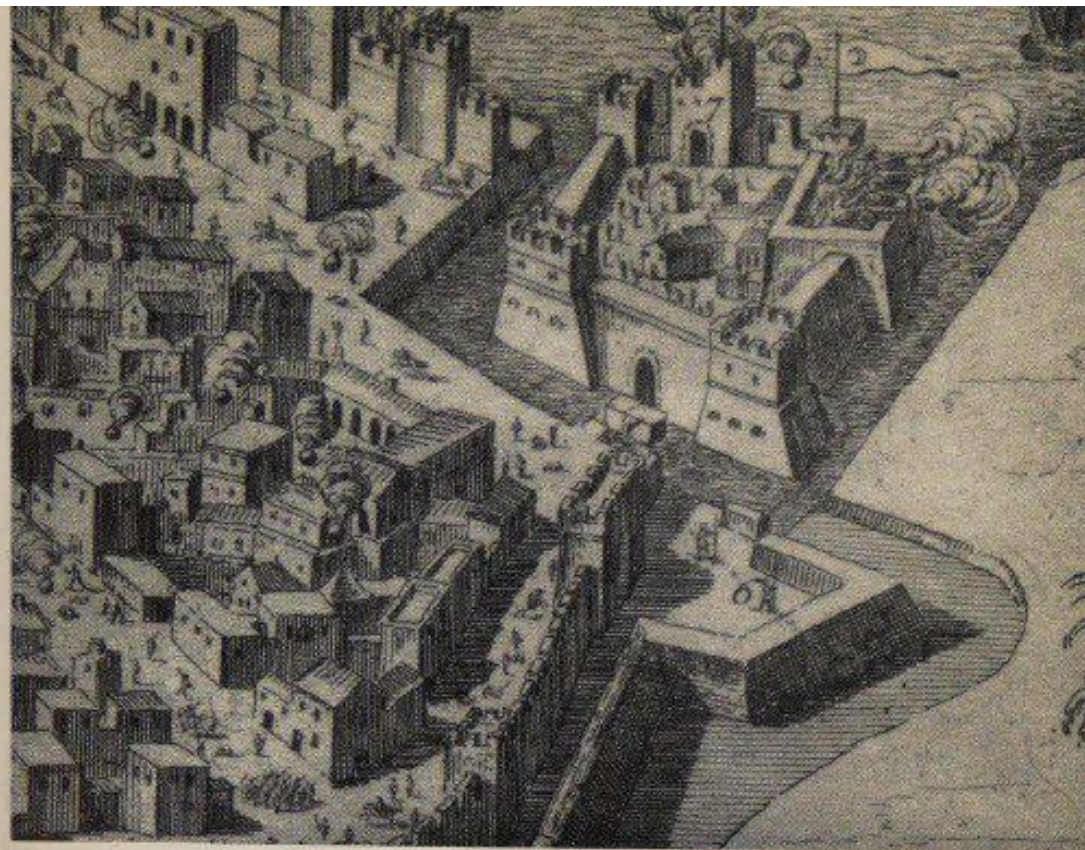
Tripolitania was now put under the British Military Administration, until in 1949 the United Nations resolved that the three territories of Libya should be constituted an independent state not later than January 1, 1952.

So it was that in **April 1951**, a federal government was set up; the powers exercised by the British in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were transferred to it in October, **and those of the French in Fezzan in December of the same year.**

H.M. King Idris I was proclaimed ruler of the independent Kingdom of Libya as a constitutional monarch in 1951.

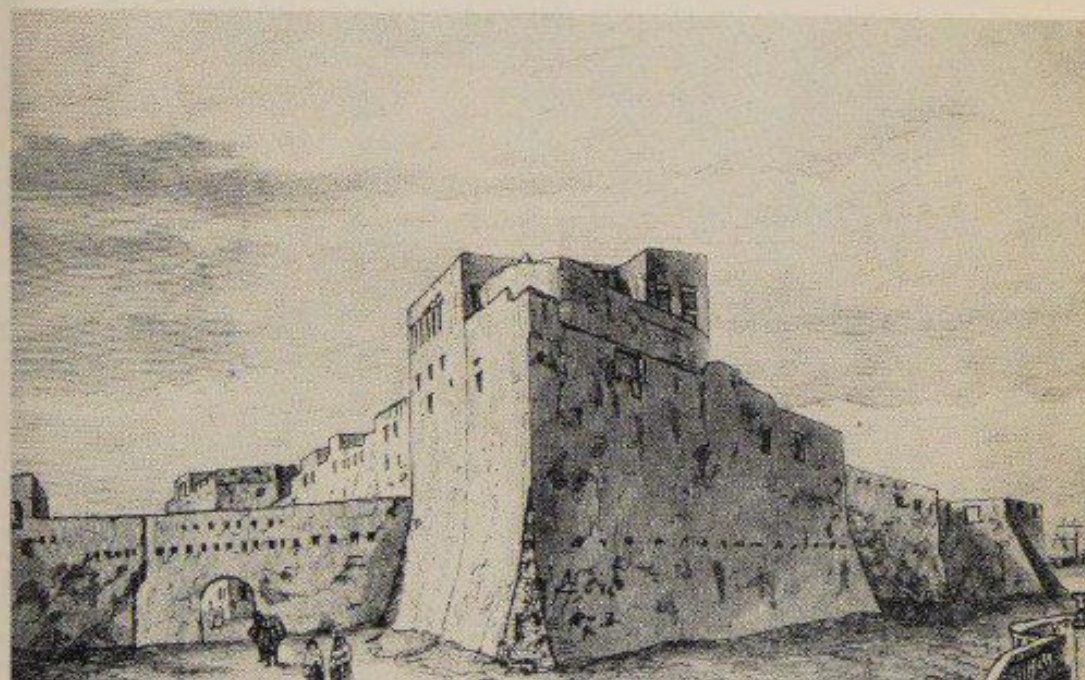
Tripolitania Now

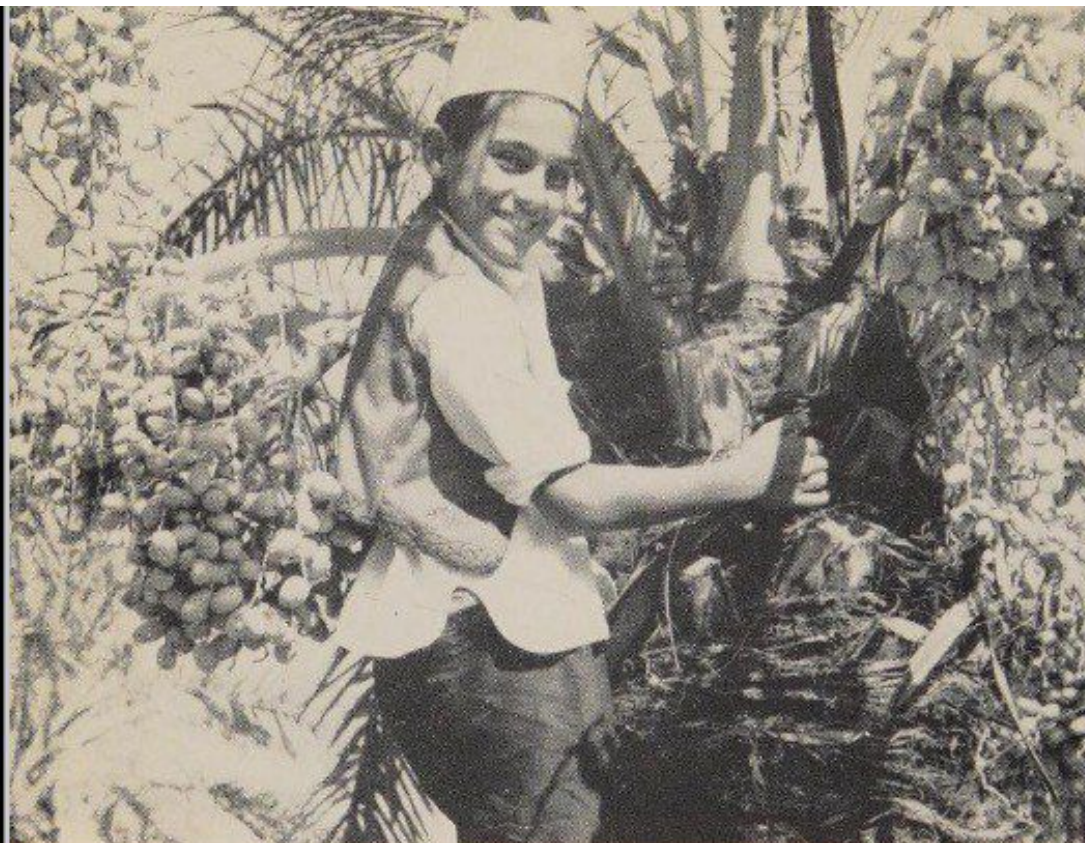
'Tripolitania', which is the sum of what its origins have made it, no longer exists as an entity, since in 1963 the government was centralized by Royal Decree, **and the former provinces of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan,** were amalgamated effectively as a result of constitutional changes approved unanimously by the legislative body. Local administration was entrusted to the Muhafid of each of the following ten governorates: *Tripoli* (population according to the 1964 census 379,925,



Tripoli Castle in 1685

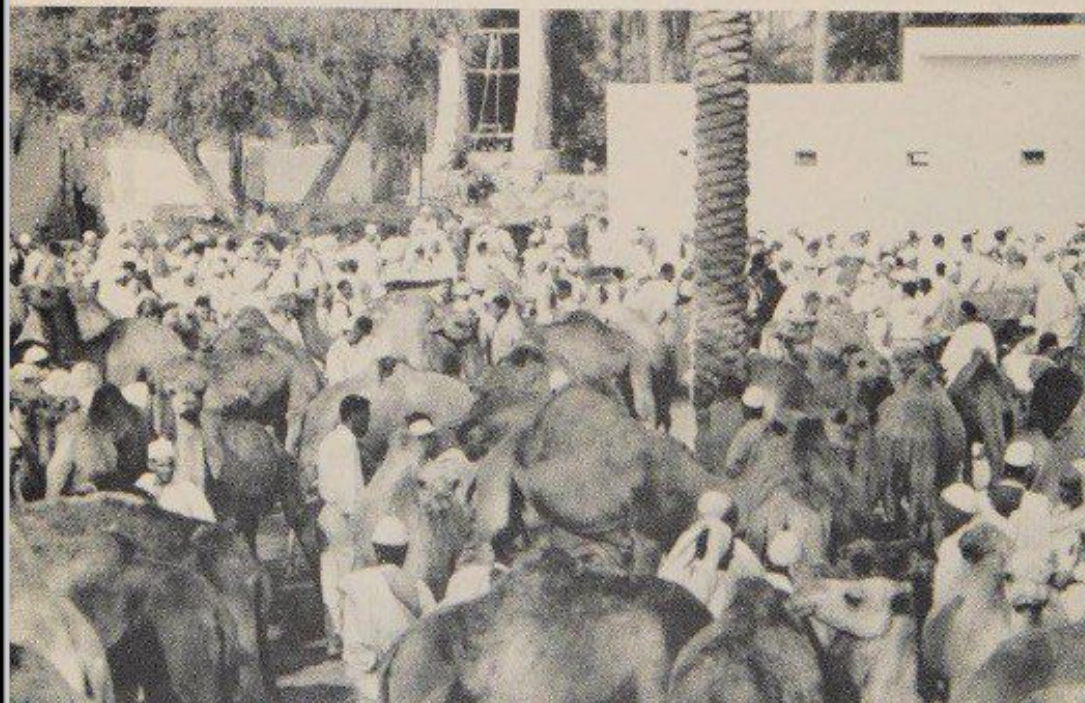
Tripoli Castle in 1873





Tripolitania: date harvest

Suq al-Jum'a: market



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of whom about 225,000 live in the city itself), *Misurata* (145,894), *Western Mountains* (180,883), *Zawia* (190,708), and *Homs* (136,679), all of which are in the former province of Tripolitania; *Benghazi* (278,826), *Green Mountains* (88,016) and *Darna* (84,112), in the former Cyrenaica; and *Sebha* (47,436), and *Ubari* (31,890) in the former Fezzan. Thus the national government exercises authority and jurisdiction over all aspects of Libyan life, other than those affecting each town's internal affairs.

There are two houses of parliament: the Senate, or Upper House, which is appointed by H.M. the King; and the House of Representatives, or Lower House, elected every four years by secret ballot. Tripoli and Benghazi are still co-capitals, but Al-Baida in Cyrenaica is becoming more important as an administrative centre in the tradition of Canberra or Brasilia.

The Economic Situation

The discovery of oil, and its exploitation in commercial quantities from 1959, has revolutionized the Libyan economy, permitting the establishment of the new series of the Tripoli International Fair (annually since 1962) and the Five-Year Development Plan, from 1963. At the same time, however, it has had the effect of inducing farmers to leave the countryside for the promise of higher wages in construction work and other by-products of the oil boom, but revenues from the oil industry are being used to establish new industries, to subsidize agriculture, and for all other useful purposes including, of course, a free health service and education. To illustrate the progress made since independence, Libya possessed only 16 High School graduates in 1951. Ten years later, nearly 300 were studying in colleges abroad, and 126 had received diplomas from the University of Libya, which was founded in 1955. This has been made possible by the wisely-administered income from oil, which in 1963

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constituted 98.7% of the monetary value of Libya's exports, and in 1964 reached 99.2%. In 1966 Libya was the sixth biggest oil-producing nation in the world.

The boom has naturally brought with it an increase in the cost of living; it has also brought prosperity to the Libyan people as a whole.

QUICK ITINERARIES

Some suggestions for the tourist with only a few days to spare

Three Days

- DAY 1 A gharry-ride along the coastal road from the eastern end of Tripoli harbour to the Castle and Arch of Marcus Aurelius, visiting the mosques, museums and markets.
- DAY 2 Full day at Leptis Magna, via Tarhuna and 'Ain Sharshara on the outward journey and Tajura on the return.
- DAY 3 Morning in the oasis of Tripoli; afternoon at Sabratha.

Four Days

- DAYS 1-3 as above.
- DAY 4 Full day round-trip of the Western Mountains, including Garian and Yafran.

Five Days

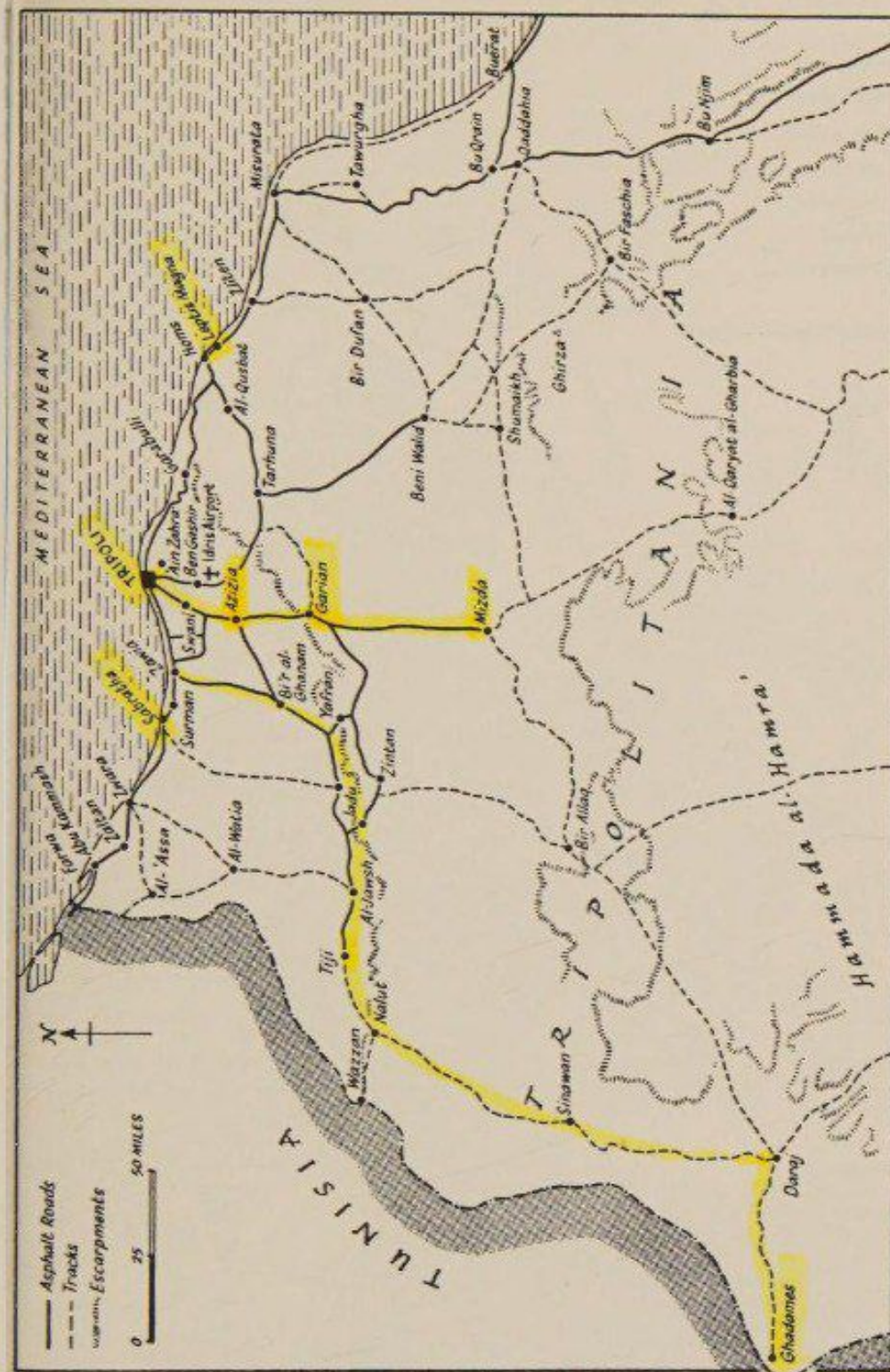
- DAYS 1-3 as above, with 2-day Ghadames visit by air if possible.

Seven Days

- DAY 1 as above. The Friday morning should be devoted to the oasis of Tripoli, with Suq al-Jum'a. The 2-day Ghadames visit by air (if possible) could be added to the 4-day programme, with a rest-day.

QUICK ITINERARIES

- DAY 2 Half-day Sabratha.
 DAY 3 Tarhuna and Beni Walid (night).
 DAY 4 'Ain Sharshara, Al-Qusbat, Leptis Magna, Homs (night).
 DAY 5 Return to Tripoli via Tajura and Suq al-Jum'a.
 DAY 6 Rest day in Tripoli, with shopping in the modern quarter.
 DAY 7 Western Mountains, possibly with Jadu.



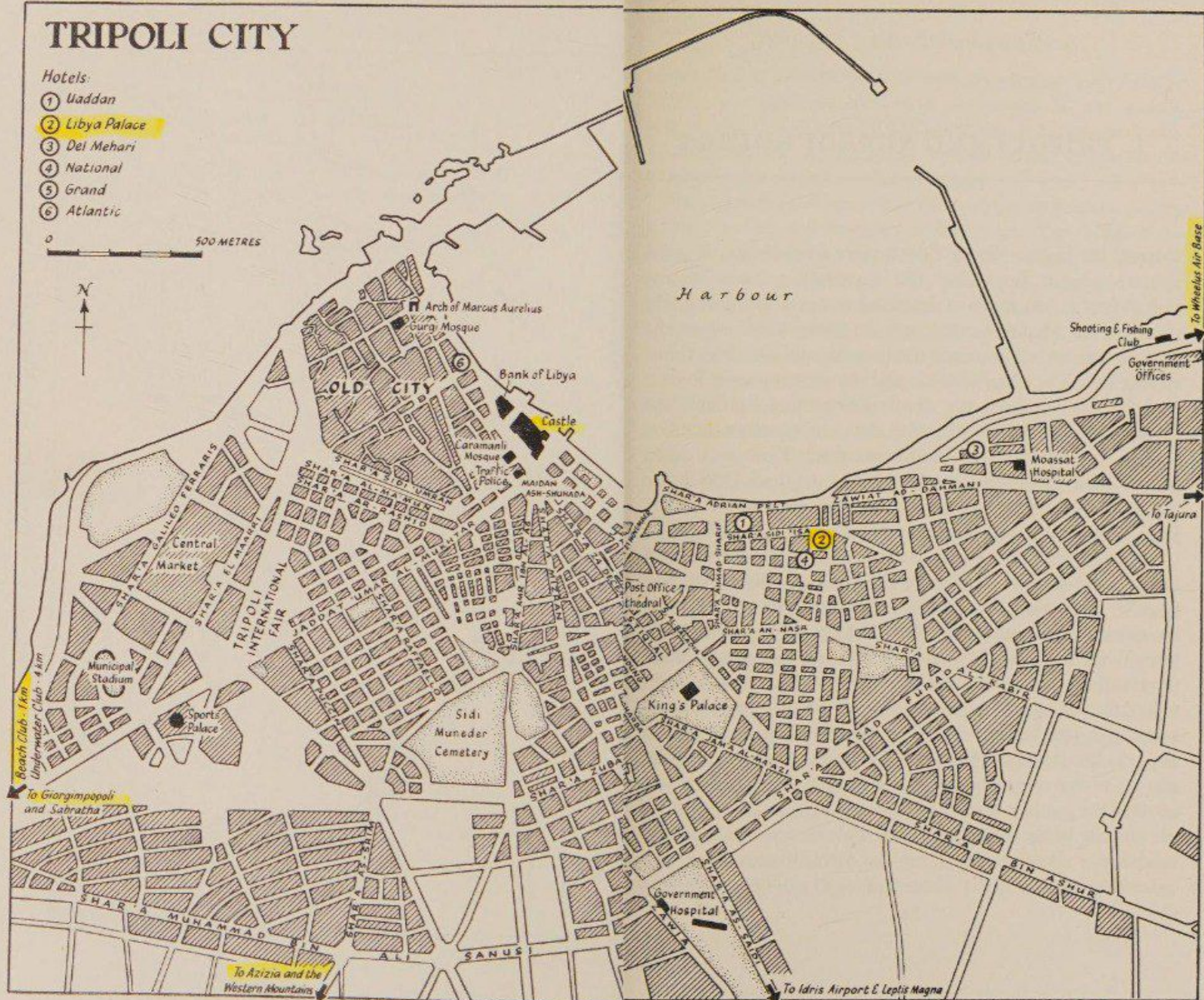
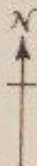
Road map of the Western Provinces, Kingdom of Libya

TRIPOLI CITY

Hotels:

- ① Uaddan
- ② Libya Palace
- ③ Del Mehari
- ④ National
- ⑤ Grand
- ⑥ Atlantic

0 500 METRES



1. TRIPOLI AND SURROUNDINGS

Tripoli, the largest city in Libya, with a population of some 230,000 people (including the surrounding oases except Suq al-Jum'a), can justly be described as one of the most lovely cities on the Mediterranean, with its clean white aspect, its modern city and picturesque old quarter, and its wide, shimmering bay. The King's Palace and the contemporary Roman Catholic Cathedral are the two buildings that dominate the modern city, that has otherwise little of touristic interest. Tripoli was founded by Phoenicians from Tyre, and called Waia. When the Romans arrived they pronounced the name 'Oea'. Only the Arch of Marcus Aurelius is preserved *in situ* from the Roman period.

Before beginning your tour of the old city, call at the Tourism Department, Shar'a Adrian Pelt, near the Ceremonial Jetty and Gazelle Fountain and get permission to visit the historic mosques. The visitor enters the Old City by Suq al-Mushir, through the Castle walls. At the left, look for the minaret of the Caramanli Mosque, and show the custodian your permission to visit. After taking off your shoes, as in all mosques, walk silently round the sumptuously-decorated interior, and in particular the grandiose minbar (pulpit). The attendant will accompany you up to the roof, where you will have a fine view over the castle to the north, modern Tripoli to the east, and the houses of the old city to the west and south. This baroque mosque was originally a church built during the Spanish occupation, and altered by Ahmad Pasha Caramanli in 1736. The mosque is

TRIPOLI AND SURROUNDINGS

square, with Renaissance columns supporting semi-circular arches. The walls are tiled in many colours, but the paving, almost entirely covered by thick carpets, is black and white. Return from the quietness and dimness of the mosque to the crowds and brightness of Suq al-Mushir.

Here local traders are selling their wares; walk up and down at your leisure and examine whatever you like. Inspect the covered market there too; you will not be pestered to buy but you will be encouraged to look and touch objects on sale. If you like something, bargain for it, since this is part of the age-old ritual of the Arab markets; the dealer will think little of your shrewdness if you pay his own price without a murmur.

Nearby is the street of the Coppersmiths (you will find it by following the sound of the beating) and the Artisans' Market, with tiny shops ranged round a central patio. Here you will find goods made of leather, brass and copper.

Ask your way now to Suq at-Turk, farther into the Old City. This is a covered market in which traditional trades (weavers, goldsmiths) jostle with imported clothes from Hong Kong and Japanese transistor radios.

One of the joys of Tripoli is the Karakus puppet show, operated nightly during Ramadan by Muhammad al-'Usta in Suq at-Turk. The Karakus shadow theatre is a mixture of Punch-and-Judy knockabout and the historic Oriental shadow theatre. The audience is predominantly juvenile, but I have enjoyed what little I could understand of the racy dialogue, with its borrowings from Turkish, the original language of the Karakus shadow plays. For two piastres for each play, lasting about fifteen minutes each, you can project yourself back into the Tripoli of the Turkish period, when so much of the Old City you see today was built. Muhammad al-'Usta inherited the shadow plays and the puppets from his father, who was himself the sole surviving showman of the popular art-form that

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stretched at one time from Istanbul to Tunis. If you are interested to learn more of these plays, you will find one of them as the last item in Kritzeck's *Anthology of Islamic literature* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston of New York or Penguin Books, 1964).

Very near the Jam'a Ahmad Pasha Caramanli and even nearer to the Jam'a al-Kharruba—so near that their muezzins are said to be able to converse with each other without raising their voices—is the Jam'a an-Naqa, historically the most important mosque in Tripoli, even if much diminished in size from its original foundation about 650, in the time of 'Uthman. It was rebuilt in the seventeenth century, having been bombarded accidentally from the sea in the previous century. The name 'an-Naqa', means 'the she-camel': the story runs as follows. Sidi 'Umar, the father-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam), was passing through Tripoli, when the camel bearing his gold stopped suddenly and refused to move an inch. Taken as an omen, the fact was perpetuated by the building of a mosque to celebrate the camel's decision. And Sidi 'Umar gave the Tripolitarians a camel's-weight of gold in recompense for the hospitality he enjoyed. Let me repeat here that it is necessary to obtain the permit to visit the three important mosques on this route in advance from the Tourism Department in Shar'a Adrian Pelt; it is free.

As you stroll through Suq at-Turk, look down the passageways at every turn: the picturesque arches give shade and coolness in the most blinding sun. The shopkeepers sit cross-legged in the smallest of the shops, talking to their friends as they check inventories or write out invoices. You will see the sign 'Public Scribe' in Arabic and Italian at intervals. At the other end of Suq at-Turk, after traversing almost all of the Old City, you emerge on an open square, bounded on the south by the Gurgi Mosque.

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The Gurgi Mosque was built in 1833 by Yusuf Gurgi, a Georgian who married into the Caramanli family. It stands, with its elegant octagonal minaret, behind the Arch of Marcus Aurelius as you walk up from the coastal road. It is rather similar to the Caramanli Mosque, with fine decorated tiles and good stucco on the arches, and is believed to have been the site of Tripoli's Islamic University in the thirteenth century.

Immediately to the north is the Arch of Marcus Aurelius, which dates from A.D. 163. Erected in honour of the Roman emperor, it typifies the Roman virtues of solidity and permanence; the worn sculptures have a stolidity about them which contrasts sharply with the delicacy you will encounter in the sculpting of the Leptis columns.

We love Marcus Aurelius for his *Meditations*, Stoic reflections in an age at war, but behind his Arch, in a street filled on the right with outdoor bakers' ovens, stands the monument of an even more intriguing literary figure. It is the old British Consulate, from which Miss Tully sent her *Letters written during a ten years' residence at the Court of Tripoli* between 1783 and 1793, when Tripoli was a dependency of the Ottoman Empire. These letters were reprinted by Arthur Barker in 1957, showing the value of this correspondence, in fact one of the very scarce documents of the period in Barbary.

The small harbour near here is full of pleasure-boats. A lazy half-hour can be spent sauntering from here to the Castle, past the Bank of Libya. Tripoli Castle's history begins in the Phoenician past; we can say that there has always been a castle on this site, commanding the harbour so massively without any loss of beauty in its rhythmic slopes and battlements. However, the building as we see it dates from 1535, when it was rebuilt by the Knights of Malta. The Caramanli dynasty ruled from it from 1711 to 1832, and altered it during that time. The last restorations were made while the Italians occupied the Castle.

TRIPOLI AND SURROUNDINGS

Fortunately, this most evocative building is open to the public daily (from 9-12 and 3-6), as it is the home of the various museums that show the visitor aspects of life in Libya that will prepare him for journeys along the coast and to the interior of Tripolitania.

The main entrance is on the side farthest from the sea. Ascend the ramp, and pass the friendly custodian—there is nothing to pay here, or at any other museum or archaeological site in Tripolitania.

If you take the first entrance right after the main entrance you will find the Ethnographical Museum. The building is a fine example of an upper-class courtyard house of the turn of the eighteenth century and is believed to have been the residence of the Caramanli harem. The first room is devoted to arms, including Tuareg weapons; then across the patio to the section on agriculture, showing the uses of esparto that once bulked so large in Libya's export trade, and materials for the study of the Arab well. You will see plenty of characteristic wells quite close to the city of Tripoli today; here it is possible to understand their operation. Other sections deal with hunting, fishing, tanning, weights and measures, pottery, handicrafts, and interesting doors from Hun, an oasis on the new asphalt road to Sebha. The rooms devoted to clothes, charms, jewels, medicine and musical instruments are upstairs; here you will note in particular a Bridal Chamber and descriptions of the indigenous peoples of the south, such as the Tibu and Dawada. On leaving the upper floor of the Ethnographical Museum you are again in view of the entrance. Go across the open courtyard and turn right, where you will see a model construction of the stage of the theatre at Sabratha. Continuing along to the Archaeological Museum you see a fine relief of the sacrifice of the oxen from the Severan Arch at Leptis Magna. It looks splendid in the open air. Its companion—Septimius Severus in the chariot—can be found in

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the Archaeological Museum a little further on. But the pre-Roman sculptures of Libya ought to be glanced at next: the Prehistoric Museum, facing you, consists of two rooms. Libya's prehistoric paintings and engravings have been overshadowed by those of the Algerian Desert in recent years, but Graziosi, Mori, Ziegert, Sattin, and others have done wonders in revealing the traces of the earliest Libyans, often in the remotest places now without life, but many centuries ago verdant and teeming with animals and birds. Those who cannot make the difficult treks into the hinterland can learn here of the findings of the last fifty years.

Opposite, the Archaeological Museum houses the choicest fragments of ancient art in Libya, apart from those too heavy to be removed from their original site. On the ground floor, note the mausoleum from Ghirza as you enter, and the monumental Roman sculpture from Leptis Magna, including the Medusa heads, a life-size Marsyas, and a haunting Agrippina the Elder. My own favourite is the Leptian fragment 'Dionysus and Charites', probably of Greek workmanship, archaic in style. It shows the god and one of the goddesses of charm, grace and beauty behind him, both in low relief, their left-turning movement exquisitely sculptured, their drapery hanging in an eternal slight breeze. In Cyrene one lives in a mood of such serenity, but in Tripolitania this quality of classical calm, this Greekness, is confined to our 'Dionysus and the Charites'. A rather bizarre comparison—with Afro-Portuguese ivory-carving—is provoked by a marvellous bearded Hermes in the end room. There is also a superb interpretation of the Ephesian Diana, goddess of human fertility.

On the upper floor, the student of Roman art has many delights: mosaics from Zliten, Leptis and elsewhere, a few precious paintings to document Roman art in Africa at this crucial period, coins, glass, lamps, and more small-scale

TRIPOLI AND SURROUNDINGS

sculpture. Incidentally, if your main interest is mosaics (in this museum the fish, animals and fruit are especially noteworthy), Sabratha is the best centre outside Tripoli; while if you are keen on painting, the Hunting Baths at Leptis Magna provide the best examples in Tripolitania.

The Epigraphic Museum is small, but worth inspecting; the Library, just above it, is essential for the serious visitor who wants to begin where this guidebook ends. Opposite the entrance to the library is the Museum of Natural History, which covers all of Libya and can be recommended as a record of wildlife that you could never hope to see in one or two weeks of travelling. The walk over the Castle affords a wide panorama over the city and harbour; you can see the cannon that is still fired to announce the beginning of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting.

While looking at the museums in the Castle, you can request permission to visit the newly-excavated Roman Villa near Tajura and the rock-engravings at Bir Miji near Tarhuna. At the same time, though in the morning only, you may ask for a guide from the Antiquities Department to accompany you on a visit to the Tomb of Aelia Arisuth in Gargaresh (provide your own car or a taxi). The hypogeum is kept permanently locked; it is reached by turning some two hundred yards down a track left of the road to Sabratha between kilometres five and six.

Aelia Arisuth's portrait, which has survived sixteen centuries and the ravages of domination by the Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Berbers, Turks, Italians and British, is not only the most beautiful portrait native to Tripolitania; it also provides our sole evidence for the existence there of the Mithraic sun-cult and, further, almost conclusive proof that women were accepted as initiates as far as the fourth grade of Mithras' seven. (This evidence is not admitted by some scholars, such as Mr C. M. Daniels.)

TRIPOLI AND SURROUNDINGS

Painted by an anonymous master in the fourth century, Aelia is shown bust-length in faded colours that add a sombre and serene tone to a harmonious design.

Behind her shoulders, the local sandstone adds its character to her mystery: she was a woman, called 'lioness' by her sisters, full of mystery.

Her eyes have not the meditative profundity of Leonardo's Madonna Lisa, and the drawing of the hands lacks a certain rhythm to be found in the contemporary frescoes of al-Fayyum. but there lies within this woman's spirit a peculiar integrity, painter's invention though this may be.

Her hair is almost completely enclosed within a *mitra*, or turban, suggesting the halo of the religion that was to supplant Mithraism in Libya a century later, and her body is draped in a bluish-green dalmatic eclipsed for effect by a brilliant white cloak covering her shoulders down to her breast.

Her simple jewellery consists of bracelet, necklace and ring. In her left hand she holds a scroll representing her last will and testament.

Beside her tomb, insignificant and mutilated is the table-tomb of Aelius Maximus Iurathani, who died after Aelia and may be assumed to be her husband.

The tomb was found by Weber during the Turkish occupation, but it was not until 1914 that it was recognized as an important landmark in Tripolitanian archaeology, and only in 1919 that it was made accessible to visitors.

A Mediterranean Rodeo

In Tripoli, it is a nostalgic reminder of hot afternoons in Arizona, where the bi-weekly *Rodeo Sports News* and *Hoofs and Horns* are published, and arenas in Colorado, home of the monthly *Western Horseman*. The palm groves where you park your car seem a little amiss, the conversations in Arabic quite

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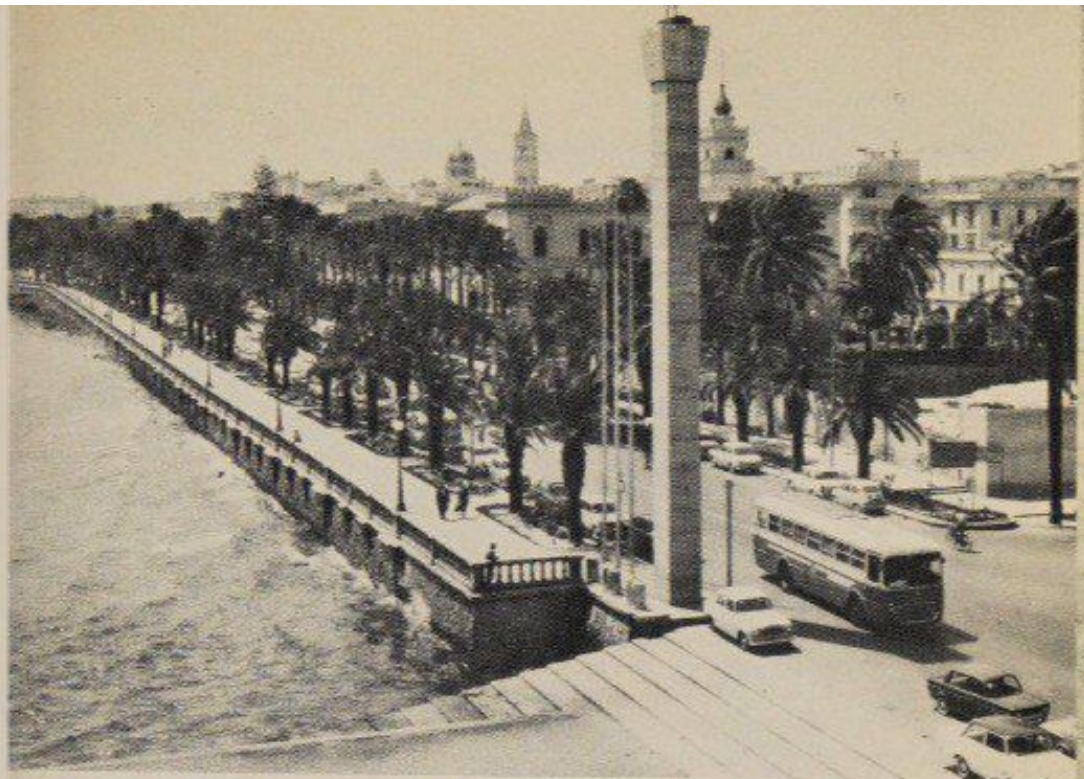
definitely non-American, but the overwhelming impression is that of the States-side family at the horse-show.

'Nuuuumber fifty-four Wayne Burland of Midland, Texas. Just as soon as he can get on this critter we'll give you Wayne Burland, Texas cowboy. Weeeeeyow, there he goes and off he comes. I don't think he's too badly cut up. What a way to earn a living. Yaaaa, give him a big hand. That was Wayne Burland, Midland, Texas.'

'Nuuuumber forty-nine Rick McGee of Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Rick has a great record, folks. He's the only rider who so far never stayed on a hoss longer than three seconds. Here he is: Rick McGee. Wooow. Pick him up boys. They fall harder from Bartlesville. Hey, go easy, he's got a wife and family out there.'

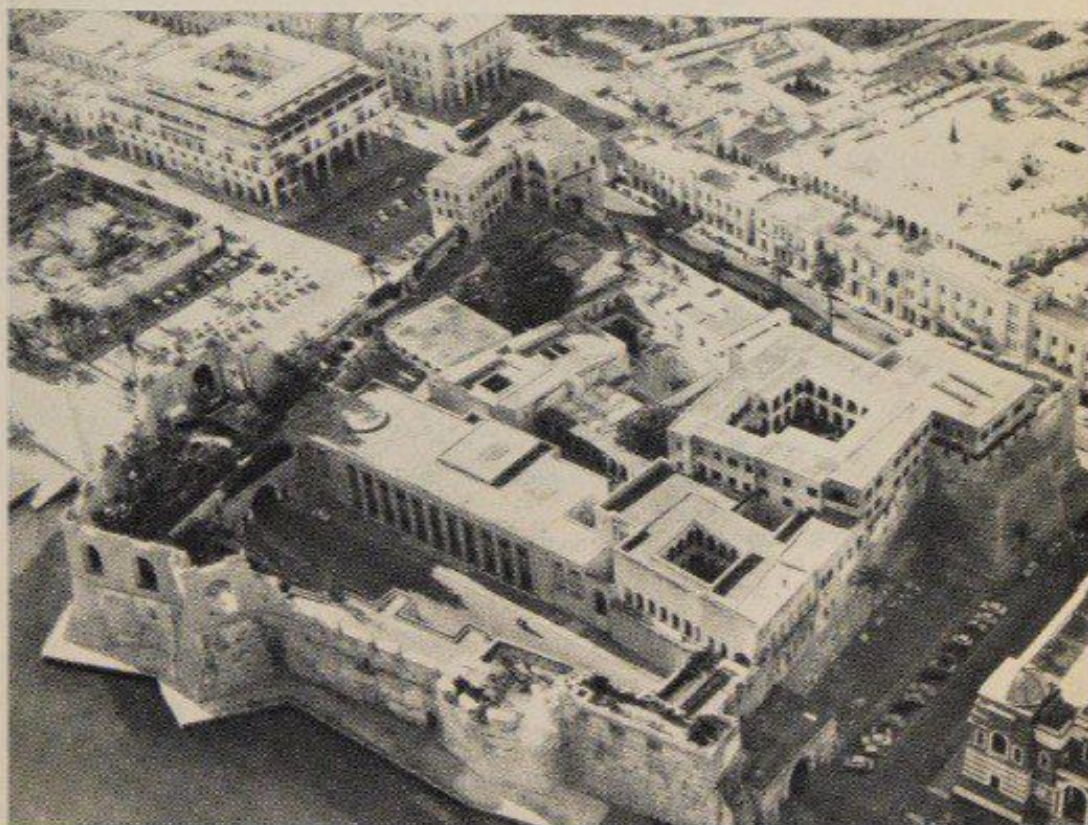
The bronc-riding, as usual, is the focal point of the rodeo. The barrel-race is for junior riders, goat-roping is no substitute for calf-roping, and the elegant show-jumping belongs to another world. It is in the bull-riding, and even more in the bronc-bucking, that the rodeo comes into its own as a unique spectacle.

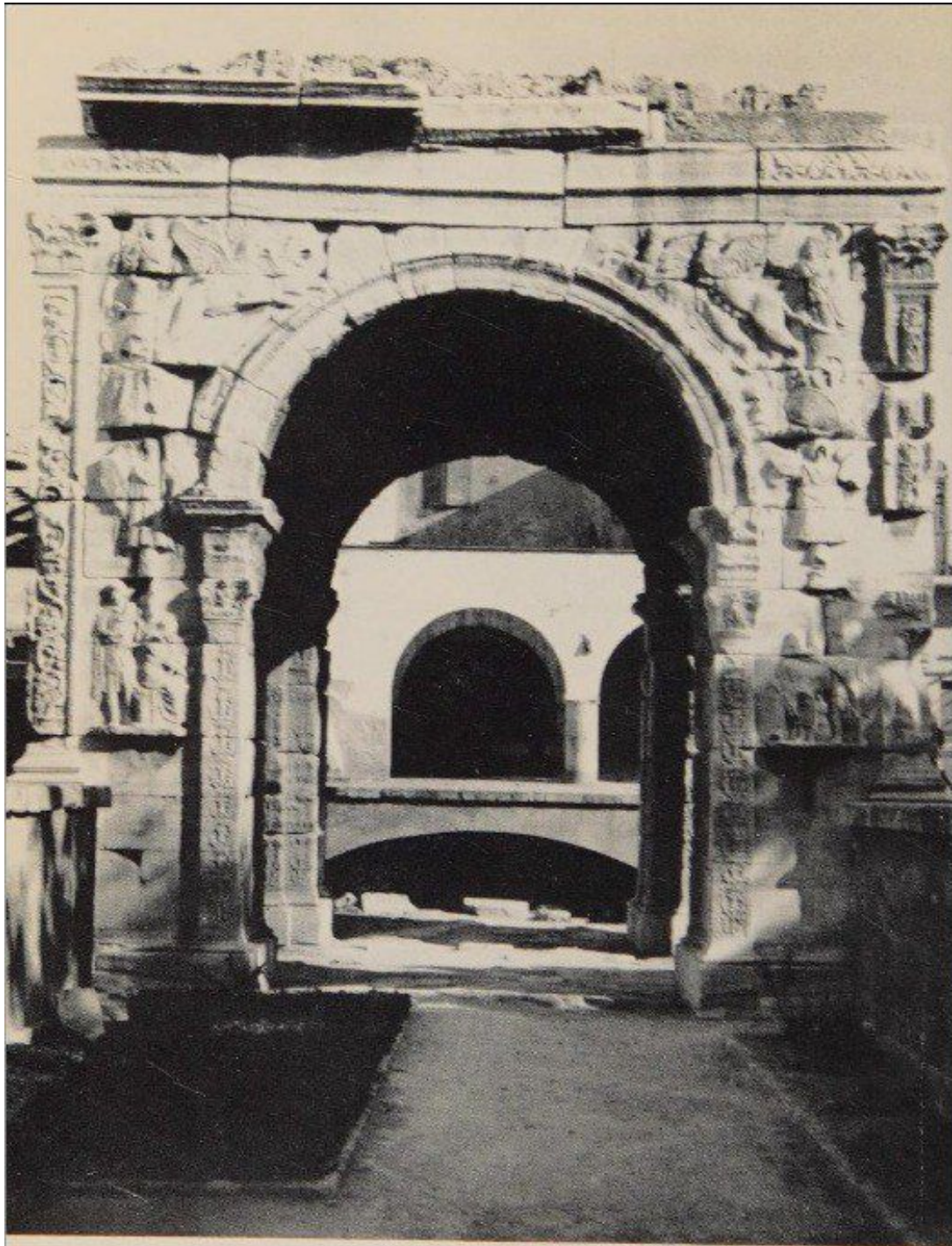
The text of the cowboy's ability to stay on a horse originated from the professional breaking of horses, a tough and often dangerous job in the early south-west; bronc-riding in rodeos has been a sport in the States since the 1870's (Cheyenne, Wyoming held one of the earliest rodeos), but the modern sport dates from the years of World War I, when a permanent indoor rodeo was set up in Fort Worth, Texas. Tripoli sees a regular succession of Hollywood's Wild West films, but at the **Wheelus Riding Club's annual rodeo** (in early September—all welcome), the cowboys perform for us, without the medium of celluloid. Nothing is lacking: polished riding-boots, ten-gallon hats, shining, massive buckles, and that lounging gait and sardonic, understating humour associated since the time of Buffalo Bill with the phrase 'Wild West'.



Tripoli: Shar'a Adrian Pelt

Tripoli: castle complex and Caramanli Mosque





Tripoli: arch of Marcus Aurelius

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'Here's nuuuuumber thirty-eight, Jim Dacewitz of Boulder, Colorado. Jim's a Colorado cowboy, ladies and gennelmen. I should tell you these critters we got here are just a bit different from the ones we know back home. These have literally never been ridden before, and some of 'em are just a bit wild.'

The rodeo clowns are themselves cowboys, and there are two pick-up men in the saddle to catch a flying rider when he leaves his mount. On the other side of the wire-netting, however, here in Tripoli the only illusion of the cowboy world is given by the nasal twang of Texas and Wyoming, mingled though it is with Arabic, Italian and clipped English accents. Hot dogs and soft cola drinks find a ready sale: dollars are as negotiable as Libyan pounds, for this is the club where Americans on Wheelus Air Base can stable their own horses. For the club officials, the rodeo is the culmination of a year of planning, and for the riders a year of practice—a year that can end in the fiasco of a few seconds for a rider bold enough to risk his bones on the caprice of a rampaging bull. The bulls are, of course, not fought in the Spanish sense of the word; they are, if possible, mastered long enough for a rider to add courage, perseverance and more than a spice of rashness to his catalogue of virtues. He has the chance to earn a prize if his doggedness prevails over that of the animal, and the opportunity to break every bone in his body if it doesn't. The ethics of the rodeo are as noble as are the ethics of all primitive festivals—the essential complementary nature of man and beast, and the need of one for the other. The audience is the judge of victory for untamed bull or taming man. Such a contest owes not a little to Cretan awe of the bull as symbol of primeval force.

'I guarantee I'll give a dollar's entrance money back to any of you good people who come round here and ride these critters.'

Challengers abounded at the bull rites in ancient Crete, but at the Wheelus Rodeo there are no takers.

TRIPOLI AND SURROUNDINGS

Hotels and Restaurants

DE LUXE

There are two *de luxe* hotels in Tripoli: more are being built as we go to press.

These are the Hotel-Casino *Uaddan* (with its own night-club), on the sea-front, and the nearby *Libya Palace Hotel*, also with a sea view. Both have a basic charge of L£3.500 for a single room with bath or shower, subject to 20% service charge. The *Uaddan* charges L£7.500 for a double room with bath and sitting-room. Half pension terms are L£5.300 for one and L£7.900 for two, while full pension terms are L£6.900 and L£11.100. Continental breakfast at the *Uaddan* is 40 piastres, lunch L£1.400 and dinner L£1.600.

The *Libya Palace* charges L£5.700 for a double room with bath and sitting-room; apartments are available at L£7.500 each. Half-pension terms are L£4.900 for one and L£7.300 for two, while full pension terms are L£5.900 and L£9.300. Continental breakfast is 40 piastres, and both lunch and dinner L£1.250.

All rooms are air-conditioned. An annexe to the *Libya Palace Hotel*, with two hundred extra beds, was opened at the end of 1966.

FIRST CLASS

The *Atlantic Hotel* charges L£2.600 for a double room with bath. Half-pension rates are L£2.700 for one and L£5.000 for two, while full pension rates are L£3.300 and L£5.500. English-style breakfast is 40 piastres extra, while lunch is 90 piastres and dinner 80. The service charge here is only 15%.

The *National Hotel* has four grades of room, with special prices for single use. The following rates include breakfast and one meal. The highest price in the range is L£4.900 for one or L£6.400 for two, including air-conditioning, and the lowest

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L£3.200 for one, without air-conditioning. The service charge at the *National* is 20%.

Parties looking for an economical hotel could select the *Del Mehari*; businessmen often in Tripoli find the *Grand* satisfactory.

Apart from those restaurants in the hotels, the following restaurants can be recommended:

Akropol in Maidan al-Jaza'ir (Cathedral Square)—Greek specialities.

Chicken on Wheels in Giorgimpoli (on the left of km 1½: neon sign)—American specialities and pizzeria.

Delfino in Shar'a 24 December, near the Castle end—Italian specialities.

Gatto Nero in Shar'a Sana'a—Italian specialities with kus-kus on Sundays.

Hollywood Grill in Shar'a 24 December, near the Palace end—international.

Lanterne in Shar'a as-Saidi, near the Palace end—international.

Parthenon in the Shooting and Fishing Club, Shar'a ash-Shatt—Greek specialities.

Piemontese Bab Gargaresh (near the Beach Club)—international.

Romagna in the gallery near Barclays Bank between Jaddat Istiqlal and Shar'a 24 December—Italian specialities.

Swan in Giorgimpoli (turn right at the sign)—American specialities.

Tavernetta at Shar'a 24 December 10—Italian specialities.

Tourist Beach in Giorgimpoli (on the right at km 6½)—international.

Guides

The Tourism Department or a travel agency will recommend guides. My advice is to ask for Mr Ali Shakshuki, a quietly-spoken government official who spends all his spare time

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conducting visitors round Tripoli and environs. His standard charge for any half-day tour (exclusive of transportation) is L£2.500. It takes a good half-day to visit the Castle and a mosque; or the Old City (apart from the Castle), or Sabratha, all of which begin at 3 p.m. Morning tours include Suq al-Jum'a and Tajura (on Fridays only) and Leptis Magna, which is a full-day trip and costs L£5.000 without the car. Mr Shakshuki can speak Italian and English, and some French. The rate quoted is for 1-5 people; for 6-10 tourists the rate is L£3.500 and rises to L£5.000 for 11-20.

Using a Camera

All makes of film are available in Tripoli, and developing monochrome films is usually a forty-eight hour job. The use of the camera is now widespread throughout Libya, but women are modestly veiled and should on no account be photographed. This understandable restriction should be applied wherever people might feel that their privacy was being infringed in any way.

Banks

It is illegal to pay for goods or services in currency other than Libyan sterling. You can change your travellers' cheques at your hotel or at any bank. The Bank of Libya is just beyond the Castle. Barclays Bank D.C.O. and the Bank of North Africa (formerly the British Bank of the Middle East) are close to each other in Jaddat Istiqlal. Il Banco di Roma is on the corner of the Place of the Martyrs (Maidan ash-Shuhada), and the Sahara Bank can be found midway along Shar'a 24 December.

Entertainment

Apart from occasional visits by touring companies, there is no theatre life in Tripolitania. In Tripoli the Cinema *Lux* (Shar'a

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'Amr ibn al-As, often known as Shar'a al-Wadi) shows American and British films, and is air-conditioned. Opera and folklore can occasionally be seen at the *Alhambra* (also Shar'a al-Wadi, nearer Castle Square), which has the biggest auditorium in the city. A new cine-theatre opened in the Hotel-Casino *Uaddan* in July 1966.

Musical concerts are arranged during the winter by the Istituto Italiano di Cultura (adjoining the Liceo Italiano, Shar'a Mizran).

For films and art exhibitions, see the local newspapers.

Night-clubs include the *Uaddan*; the *Mokambo* (Shar'a as-Saidi), open from 9.30; *Rose's Garden* (Miani, outside the city on the Homs road), open from 10; and the *Florida* in Gargaresh, km 7.

Local American television is shown from 5 p.m., Radio Televisione Italiana can be received from 2 p.m. (radio) and 6.30 p.m. (television). Television programmes from Malta and Tunisia can also be received, while Libyan television is expected to start within the very near future. Local American radio can be heard all day. Reception of the BBC World Service is fair. Radio Libya broadcasts in Arabic. Italian radio and European reception generally is excellent.

Folklore

Some of the older customs are gradually being eroded in modern Tripoli, but most live on, particularly the religious festivals, such as that of the Mawlid, or birth of the Prophet (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam). Libya has a well-known folkdancing troupe based in Tripoli: the highlight is Salim Bukhari's 'Gazelle Dance'. Muhammad Abdelkafi has written knowledgeably about *Weddings in Tripolitania* (Ministry of Information and Culture, L£0.500), and his book is notable for the descriptions of local costume.

Sports

The most popular sport in Libya is probably swimming, which is possible almost everywhere along the coast of Libya: a total of some 1900 kilometres! The beaches at Giorgimpopoli or near the Wheelus Air Base are the best public beaches, but there are several privately-owned that you may prefer to enquire for while in Tripoli, including a Municipal Beach. Motor-boats and rowing boats can be hired at the wooden pier near the Ceremonial Jetty (Gazelle Fountain roundabout).

Association football has a wide following, and the Tripolitanian Championships are keenly contested in the Municipal Stadium (near the Tripoli International Fairground) from September to May each year. Matches are played on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays beginning at about 4 p.m.

Basketball and boxing are other spectator sports with a good following; see them in the Sports Palace in Jaddat 'Umar al-Mukhtar.

Tennis and table-tennis can be played at the Beach Club at Bab Gargaresh; and facilities for sports are available at the Underwater Explorers' Club (sign to the right) in Giorgimpopoli, where there is also a Bowlarena for ten-pin bowling.

Other clubs include the Elizabethan (near the Uaddan Hotel), the Shooting and Fishing (Shar'a ash-Shatt) and the Yacht Club (near the Docks).

Golf is played at the Seabreeze Club, near Wheelus Field, and at Tripoli Golf Club (km. 6 on the Swani Road). At the Tripoli club you must be accompanied by a member; at Seabreeze a pound or so will pay for your green fees and the hire of clubs.

Horse-race meetings are held on Sunday afternoons in April and October every year at Bu Sitta racecourse, a turning right off the Wheelus Highway.

Shopping

In planning a shopping expedition, remember that because Friday is the Muslim religious holiday many shops will be shut; the same is true of the Italian shops on Sunday, of course. Shopping hours are not fixed; often the shopkeeper does not bother to open at all one day, and compensates by staying open much later the next day. A greengrocer we used was closed for several days at a time: we arrived in Tripoli late one evening back from a journey into the desert and found him dusting the shelves at 11.30 p.m. And he had two customers! The bigger shops in the fashionable shopping area tend to open about 8.30 a.m. and close at about 1 for lunch, taking their siesta (even in Winter) until about 4 p.m. They then stay open till 8 or so, but I have never heard a tradesman ask a customer to leave because it was 'closing time'. Don't worry about any imagined language difficulty—there is always someone in the larger shops who can understand English and help you.

When shopping, relax. Greet a Libyan shopkeeper with 'Ahlan wa sahan', which he will repeat with a smile in reply. In the old city, be ready to shake hands, and especially in the towns of the interior ask the health of the shopkeeper (Kaif haluk?) and be slow to come down to business, since it is universally regarded as a courtesy in Arab countries to be more interested in the personality of the man you are dealing with than in any possible transaction. If you think the tradesmen are just out to get your money, forget that idea, since it is very far from the truth.

The main European shopping centre is concentrated in Shar'a 24 December, and in Jaddat Istiqlal, where you will find the Libyan Handicrafts Shop which has a representative selection of local souvenirs. The best way of indicating the price-range is to list the average cost of certain items in April 1967.

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	piastres		piastres
Cinema (Circle)	20	Laundry—dress	25
Ladies' hair-set	80	Libyan cigarettes (20)	10
Men's haircut	35	Coffee in bar	5
Laundry—shirt	10	Local English weekly newspaper	2½

Souvenirs of Libya include rugs from Misurata, Tuareg daggers, dates with almonds, fabrics woven in Fezzan, pottery, sheepskin rugs, copper beaten in Tripoli, slippers from Ghadames, pouffes and other leatherwork, such as wallets and purses. My own weakness is for the art of the goldsmith: you will find near the Caramanli Mosque in the Old City a whole street of jewellers, whose wares include bracelets, rings and filigree work.

Communications

A twenty-four hour a day cable service is available in Tripoli at the Head Post Office in Maidan al-Jaza'ir (Cathedral Square). Cards and letters sent by air will reach Europe in 1-3 days and the United States in 2-4 days. Postage rates are calculated according to a basic rate for surface mail, and a new graduated tariff for airmail according to destination, so that, for example, a postcard needs stamps to the value of 2½ piastres, and a letter weighing below 20 grams will be 4½ piastres. To most Arab countries the excess for airmail is 1 piastre, to most European countries (including U.K. and Italy) 1½ piastres, and to the U.S.A. 4 piastres. Telephone calls all over the world can be arranged from the Head Post Office.

Telephone numbers you might care to note within Tripoli: Fire 34444 and 31800; Ambulance 35000; Police 33666; Traffic Police (Road Accidents) 35444.

TRIPOLI AND SURROUNDINGS

Medical Services

The Moassat Hospital (behind the Del Mehari Hotel) can be recommended for all medical and dental treatment. It has a large international staff of highly-qualified specialists. Costs are proportionately high.

There is an all-night pharmaceutical service in Tripoli; most of your supplies can be found at one or other of the many chemists in all areas of the city. Look for the red crescent, not the red cross!

Books and Maps

Books and newspapers in English are sold at most news-stands in Tripoli and at Orient Bookshop, Shar'a Baghdad 18-20; Fergiani Bookshop, Shar'a 24 December 90. Maps and guides can be had from Cartolibreria Libia, Jaddat Istiqlal 81.

There are many libraries in Tripoli. For English books, the British Council's Library at Zawiat ad-Dahmani 16, is best. For American books there is the excellent American Cultural Center library in Shar'a al-Baladia. Other libraries and bookshops will be found in my *Survey of Libyan bibliographical resources* (Libyan Publishing House, Jaddat 'Umar al-Mukhtar 304, price 25 piastres).

News is published in Arabic, Italian and English in Tripoli. I recommend *The Tripoli Mirror*, which confines its news to Libya, and is an admirable source for coming events. Buy it (from P.O. Box 911, Tripoli) for a few weeks before your arrival, and you might find its magazine-type approach pleasant enough to continue your subscription when you get home.

There have been excellent books on *The Antiquities of Tripolitania* (by D. E. L. Haynes, 5/- from Glen Freebairn, 4 Clements Inn, London, W.C.2), and other booklets on Sabratha and Leptis Magna, but no general guidebook to Tripolitania is in print in any language.

TRIPOLI AND SURROUNDINGS

Neither is there a really good map of Tripolitania on the market. You can obtain a passable touring map at any filling station, but provide yourself beforehand with the best on the market: the Michelin no. 153, covering north-west Africa, which is dated 1965. As regards a map of Roman Tripolitania, however, we have the pioneering *Tabula Imperii Romani* by R. G. Goodchild (7/6d. from the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W.1—the sheet covering Roman Cyrenaica is the same price).

Diplomatic Representation

The British Embassy in Tripoli is situated on the coast road, Shar'a Adrian Pelt. Tel. 31191.

The American Embassy in Tripoli is in Via Grazioli, near the King's Palace. Tel. 34021.

SUQ AL-JUM'A AND TAJURA

If you leave Tripoli one Friday morning at about 10 a.m., turning off Shar'a Adrian Pelt at Zawiat ad-Dahmani, just before the left bend, in six kilometres you will arrive at the town of Suq al-Jum'a. By 10.30 the animated market is in full swing, and the roads will be crowded with donkey-carts, herds of camels—with one or more exhibitionists to keep the passers-by attentive—flocks of sheep, the noise and smell of the animals, the hooting of impatient motorists held up by ambling camels, the cries of a hundred vendors, and loud haggling for agricultural equipment such as hand-ploughs, or for brightly coloured cloth, or for any of the other goods heaped up in countless piles around and beyond the main square. So near the cosmopolitan shopping centre of Tripoli, Suq-al-Jum'a has not changed its atmosphere for many centuries and can with perfect justification be considered a typical Arab market-town.

TRIPOLI AND SURROUNDINGS

The most interesting scene there is probably the camel-market. A fine male camel will fetch between L£80 and L£110; a female rather less; a baby camel about L£15 to L£30. In the centre of the market is a covered area where the elders congregate to chat and assess the day's livestock; a boy is continually brewing tea amid the babel and serving it to the assembly in an endless clatter of tiny cups. Here at Suq al-Jum'a very few wear European dress; the flowing barakans are equally serviceable in keeping out the heat of summer and the chill of winter; they suit the colour and wild nature of the camels in a way that no foreign garb possibly could.

Buy spices and local pottery if you like before going back to your car. Continue—very slowly through the crush—on the same road eastward. At the twelfth kilometre you will arrive at the large, fertile oasis of Tajura.

A drive around Tajura oasis on a characteristically sunny day is one of the most delightful experiences in Tripolitania. If you have obtained prior permission from Tripoli's Tourism Department, you can visit the fine sixteenth-century Mosque of Murad Agha, with its Roman columns salvaged from Leptis Magna and its classical Arab arches. Contrast the silence here with the tumult at Suq al-Jum'a!

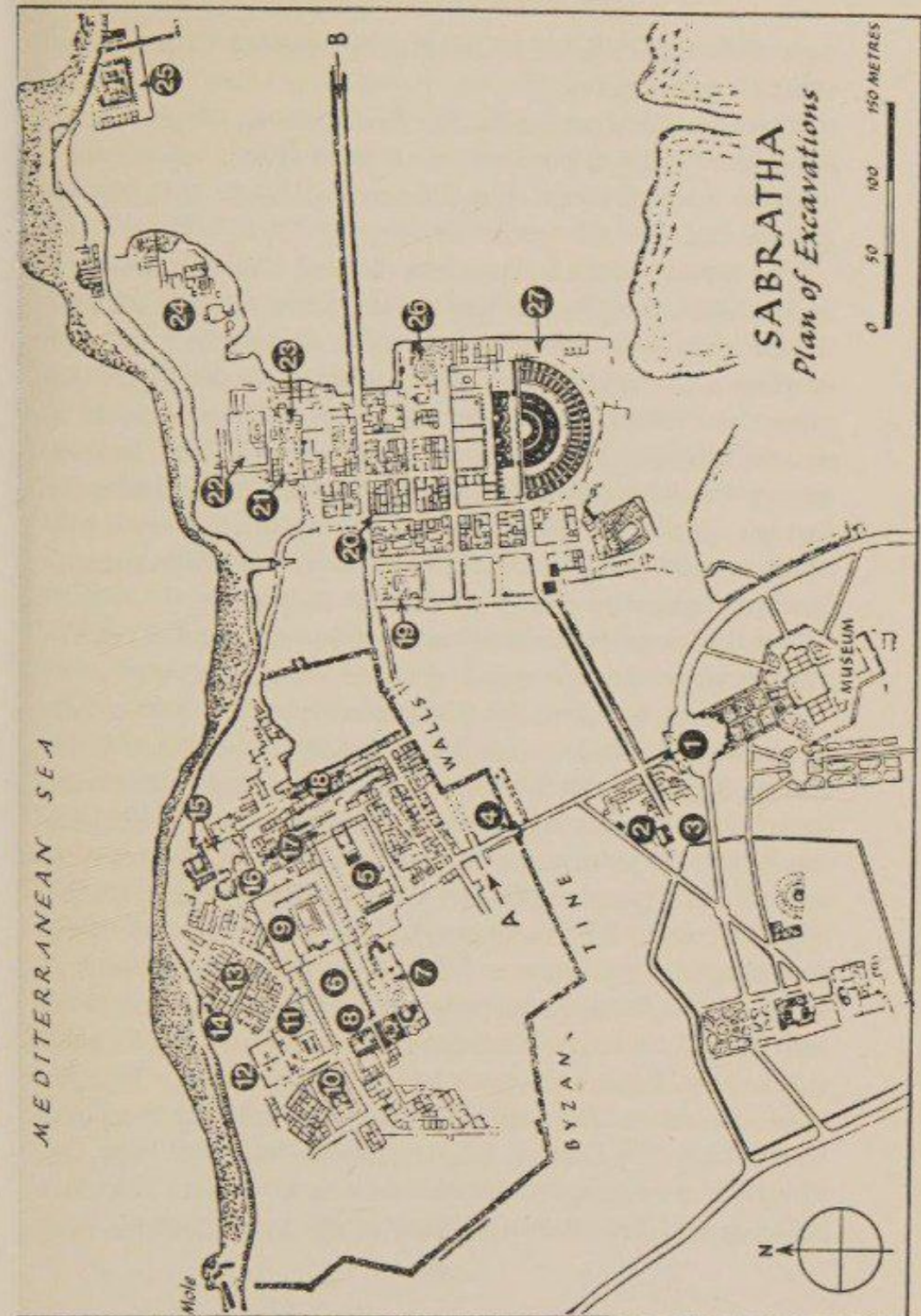
Tajura must clearly have been a favourite settlement during Roman times, when it was known as Turris ad Algam, but so far little evidence of occupation has been found. Recently, however, a Roman villa was discovered just beyond Tajura on the coastal road to Garabulli (sign left on highway) and the research has been published by Dr. Antonino di Vita in a supplement to the annual *Libya Antiqua* (1966).

2. SABRATHA AND FARWA

To help you in the choice of transport, there are three possible ways of getting to Sabratha: by N.A.M.T.E. guided tour for two persons: L£5 each for a half-day, and L£7 each (including lunch) for a full day; by hired car from the Volkswagen Hire Service (Shar'a Damascus 3), L£3.500 for a full day, (basic charge of L£2.500 per day per 100 kms. plus 2 piastres for each km. over 100) with an estimated L£1.000 extra for petrol; by taxi from Cathedral Square including a four-hour wait, a return fare of L£7 per car load subject to bargaining.

The coastal road west from Tripoli runs uninterruptedly through Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, but we are only concerned with it as far as Abu Kammash ('Pisida' in Italian), which is the last village before the Tunisian border.

Beginning from the Uaddan Hotel, you follow Shar'a Adrian Pelt as far as the Castle, where you turn left into Castle Square and continue straight on along Jaddat 'Umar al-Mukhtar (named after the great Libyan martyr) and through the flourishing suburb of Giorgimpopoli and its continuation Gargaresh, named after a twelfth-century corsair. Americans nostalgic for home will brighten at the 'Chicken on Wheels' and the Bowl-arena as they drive out of Giorgimpopoli with its own First Baptist Church and California Street. But the landscape changes and soon suburbs give way to isolated houses, and then the very idea of the city becomes remote. The haughty camels and jogging donkeys outnumber cars; life's tempo slows as surely by Zanzur (the 'Zenzor' whose dates, peaches, and pomegranates



were celebrated by Leo Africanus) as by Swani or Tajura on the other roads out of Tripoli.

About 44 kilometres distant lies Zawia, a town of agricultural importance, with a pleasant tree-shaded central square surrounded by small shops. The fishermen of Zawia catch tunny, and are renowned sponge-divers.

The modern town and ancient ruins of Sabratha are only 22 kilometres from Zawia. The site is reached along an avenue. At the end, bear left into a car park situated between the museum and the restaurant. Go into the museum to get the pamphlet *Sabratha* issued by the Tourist Department at a nominal charge. This contains histories of the city and its excavations, with a photograph of the Neptune in small tesserae that is a star feature of the museum. If you enter the main hall of the museum you will find the mosaics from the sixth-century Basilica of Justinian which are magnificently restored.

The itinerary I have shown on the plan excludes the amphitheatre, which can be reached by car on leaving the site.

First stand at (1) on the plan, where you will have a fine conspectus of the site, with the museum just behind and the theatre on your right. The most active excavation is, however, concentrated on your left, where an important Punic monument has been discovered, and is soon to be published. As you walk down to the Byzantine gate (4), notice the house with baths (2) and the monumental fountain (3). Beyond the Byzantine wall, you arrive at the Antonine Temple (5) with the basilica (7) opposite. The Roman basilica was at first a law court and town hall. After the spread of Christianity to Sabratha, Oea (Tripoli) and Leptis Magna—the three towns which comprise Tripolitania—all the secular basilicas were converted into churches. In the case of Sabratha, this conversion coincided with the change in direction from north-south to east-west. Note the baptistry and the altar of Byzantine age in the centre. The

building is famous as the scene of Apuleius' vigorous defence against the charge of sorcery in the year A.D. 157. The *Apologia* by the author of *The Golden Ass* is as different from the defence of Socrates as any speech could be: rhetorical, passionate, and fantastic. He was acquitted by the proconsul Claudius Maximus and devoted the rest of his life to learning.

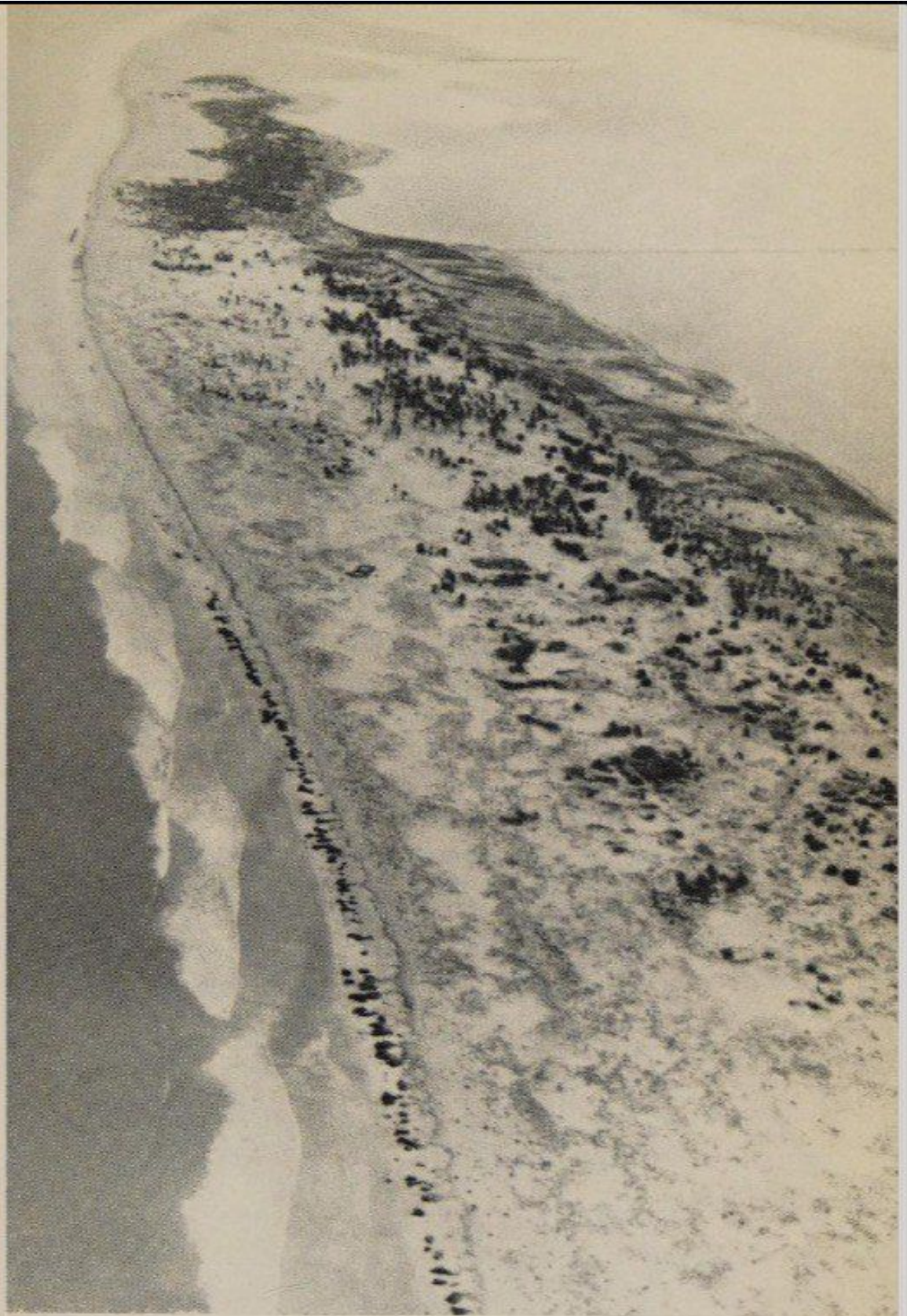
Further towards the sea, you now come to the Forum (6), marking the centre of the first-century town. At the western end is the Capitolium (8), with its platform for orators at the front. Opposite this great area is another temple, whose deity is so far unidentified (9). At the north-west of the site is the Temple of Serapis (10), which is probably earlier even than the foundation of the Forum area, since it is not precisely aligned with this. The Council Chamber, or Curia, is at (11), while at (12) you will find the location of Justinian's church from which most of the Museum's mosaics were taken. Continuing along the sea-shore glance at the fishing boats of the Sabrathans to the west, then at (14) look at the oil press in the residential quarter of the port (13). At (16) you will be astonished by the advanced sanitation of the Roman town-planners and engineers; this communal lavatory, of some thirty seats, was an integral part of the public baths (15), which have some good mosaics. Take your time in returning via the street (17), since there is very little shelter in this part of the site, and also because some of the houses near here possess interesting mosaics. Follow the street of the Byzantine walls (18) until you come to the Temple of Hercules (19) and more baths (20) and (23). Basilican churches of the fourth century are to be found at (21) and (22). You now have a view of the top of the columns of the Temple of Isis (25), so make your way there via the Baths of Oceanus (24). The Temple of Isis is of first-century date. I rate it with the Portico of the Petronii at Thuburbo Majus in Tunisia as one of the loveliest, most characteristic buildings of Roman Africa. You

SABRATHA AND FARWA

can continue to the amphitheatre by foot, but my advice if you are touring Sabratha for the first time is to go slowly back across the *decumanus* (A-B) to the Christian cemetery (26) and the Theatre (27), thence to your car, and to the amphitheatre by car.

Enter the theatre from the direction of the House of the Peristyle—that is, from the back. As you walk up the steps suddenly you will see one of the most dramatically beautiful scenes that Africa can offer: the palace stage open to the sky, which meets the even more brilliant sea in a glittering fusion that never ceases to astound. The theatre—supreme art and artificiality—arrives at realism in Sabratha by union with nature in a way that only the Greeks (at Epidavros or Segesta) had been able to achieve. But is Sabratha really a theatre? It is. In May 1965 the theatre again resounded to applause, during the first Sabratha Festival of Fine Arts, which included Libyan folkdancing and Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* with an international cast. Best of all, in the following June, the North African classical playwright, Terence, was revived in the Theatre of Ostia Antica Company's production of *His own worst enemy*, in a modern Italian version, using floodlighting for the second act. The effect was stunning, and even if you don't have the chance to see an actual performance in Sabratha's ancient theatre (though the Festival of Fine Arts is planned as an annual event about every May), imagine the rows of seats thronged with a cosmopolitan audience on a warm summer night. In the soft darkness any break in the dialogue allows the lap of the waves to be heard, like incidental music. Even *Don Giovanni* in the grandiose Temple at Baalbek cannot surpass this hallucinatory presence.

The amphitheatre is reached by a track to the left immediately after leaving the site-boundary. The great size of the amphitheatre reminds us of the prosperity of ancient Sabratha, whose

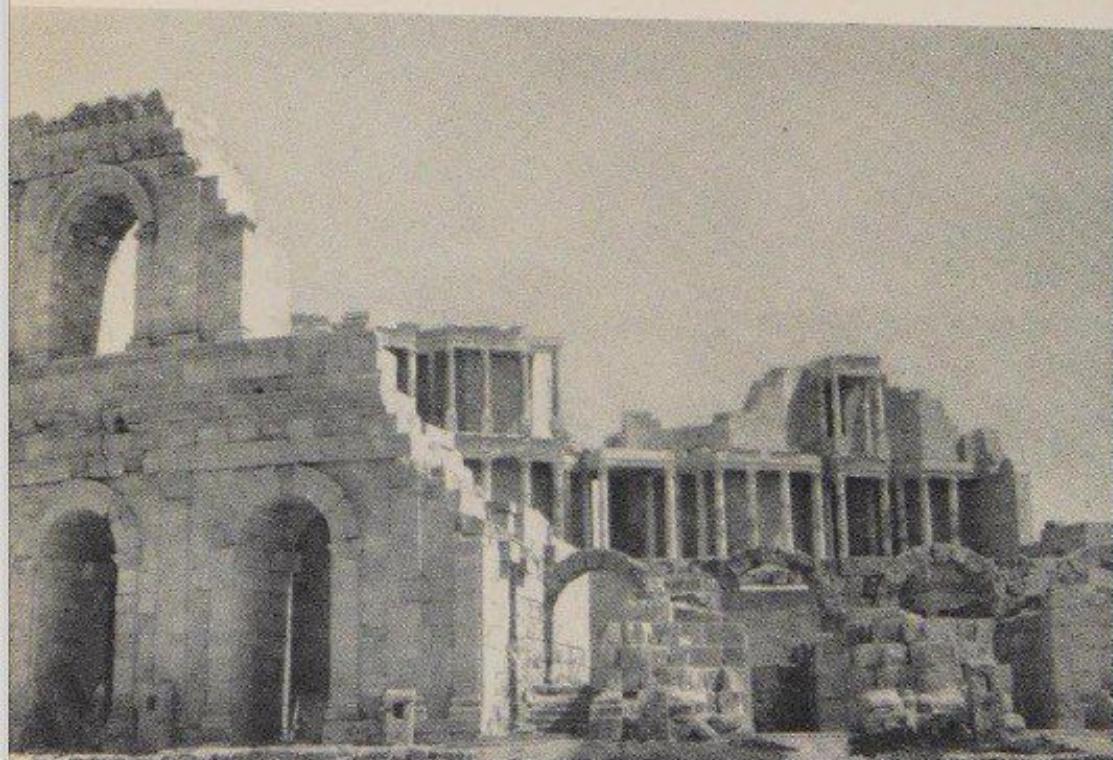


Farwa: aerial view



Sabratha: ruins of temple

Sabratha: ruins of Roman theatre



SABRATHA AND FARWA

exports to gladiatorial Rome were represented by an elephant in the Sabrathan 'agency' in Ostia, the port of Rome. The bloody combats of the gladiators in Sabratha must have rivalled those of the Colosseum, which is only slightly larger than this arena.

Lunch can be had from about 12.30 in the Hotel-Restaurant *agli Scavi*; it is generally excellent value for the average charge of 75 piastres per person; there is also a bar. The hotel has some rooms available, with showers, at a nightly charge of L£ 1.800.

Some 39 kilometres past Sabratha is the customs post and camel-breeding centre of Zwara (the Roman 'Casas'). Again, look for the characteristic central square, with a covered market. There is also a picturesque line of small shops well worth a photograph and wonderful beaches.

I include the peninsula of Farwa on this itinerary, but in fact it is advisable to set out from Tripoli early in the morning in order to arrive at the landing stage of Abu Kammash just before 8 a.m., when the Government ferry boat leaves the mainland for the day. However, if you prefer a later start, it is possible to hire a private boat when you arrive at Abu Kammash.

Leaving Tripoli at 4.30 on a July morning is in itself an experience. The air is cool and the street lights blaze out of the darkness on to empty roads, deserted by all but an occasional policeman, standing solitary at his post as he watches over the sleeping city. The noise of the car shatters the silence as it roars down the Jaddat Istiqlal where the traffic lights blink out of the darkness. Finally we left the city behind us and were driving west on the coastal road to Tunisia, which we were to follow as far as Abu Kammash where at 8 o'clock we were taking the ferry across to Farwa. Gradually behind us the first signs of pink were showing in the sky and then the pink deepened to red as the dawn broke gently around us.

By the time we reached Zawia the first early risers were

already sitting outside their houses, and here and there we met a cow being led along the road. At Surman we had a brief stop and already there was activity in the square where the business of the day would take place. A huge pile of melons was spread outside a shop and by it was a bed where the owner had obviously been keeping a watchful eye on his goods during the night, but now his bed was empty as he prepared for the day's sales. At Zwara we stopped near the railway station which had formerly marked the last point on the Tripolitanian west-bound railway. In the nineteen-twenties, trains left Tripoli for Zwara at 7 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and arrived 6½ hours later (with frequent stops, of course) returning the following day. The service ended only a very few years ago, with the great improvement of the coastal road. Now from the disused building a few chickens appeared, while a window blew to and fro in the morning breeze and this was the only sign of life in the deserted station. As we continued our journey we came across two more buildings which had been intended as railway stations—one at Zaltan and the other at Abu Kammash, but the continuation of the projected railway as far west as this was interrupted by the war, and with the subsequent closure of the whole railway system, these were two stations which had never seen a train! If the Zwara area contains the 'Ammone' of the Peutinger Table, the present town must have been founded relatively recently, because its name appears for the first time as 'Punta dar Zoyara' in a Catalan sailing manual dated 1375.

At Zaltan we exchanged greetings with the official at the passport control point and he waved us on our way. By 7.45 we had reached Abu Kammash (the Greco-Phoenician 'Pisindon') and looking out across the bay we could see the long line of palm trees marking the shores of Farwa. Although usually called an island, Farwa is technically a peninsula some 12 kilometres long, and is connected to the mainland by an isthmus about 250

metres wide. It runs parallel to the coast of Tripolitania, from which it is separated by a very shallow lagoon about 3 kilometres wide. Coming towards us across the calm water was the tiny motor-boat which leaves Abu Kammash daily at 8 a.m. and we drove down a rough track from the road to the tiny pier to await its arrival. As the only two passengers for the trip, we were soon on board taking with us all our provisions for the day since there are no shops on Farwa. Do not make the mistake of overloading yourself for this trip as there is a good deal of walking to do once you land on the island and too many heavy bags would spoil the pleasure. The ferry-man told us that there are 200 people living on Farwa, most of whom are Berbers. **The Berbers of North Africa have their own language, which is not in the least similar to Arabic.** In Tripolitania the main Berber centres are Ghadames and its environs, the Western Mountains, and this region linking Zwara to Farwa. Generally Berbers have adopted not only Islam, the religion of the Arabs, but also the Arabic language itself, even if in the privacy of their own homes they prefer Berber. In Farwa, exceptionally, the Arab minority has learnt to use the Berber language. The only industry of Farwa, apart from a little cereal-growing, is fishing. Fish constitute the bulk of their own diet and Farwa's principal export to the mainland, where it is sold in the markets of Tripoli and Zwara. We learned that the translation of Farwa is 'a fur', and seeing the narrow strip of land stretched out in front of us it was easy to imagine it as an animal-skin drying in the sun. The palms were becoming taller now as we neared the shore and they contrasted with the only permanent building on the island, a house built by Italo Balbo, a former Italian Governor in Libya. The water in the bay is so shallow that even a small boat has to land at the end of the 400 yard-long pier, and from here we walked between fishing nets until we reached the sandy beach where we were greeted enthusiastically by some men working on a boat.

Soft, warm sand covers the whole island of Farwa and gives it the appearance of being one vast beach. We wandered the island from south to north, pausing to rest in an idyllic palm grove from where we could see the sea on both sides of us. The north beach is perfect for bathing as the water is rather deeper than on the south side, and as clear as crystal. After our bathe we walked eastwards across the island, passing through the centre of the village where we saw some of the palm huts which are the islanders' homes. Some women were drawing water from the well, while others were cooking round a communal fire. On the east side of the island there are fewer palms, but we found some pleasantly shady bushes under which to eat our picnic lunch. The sea was so inviting that we decided to have another bathe, and this time we were joined by some of the islanders who were so glad to see us that they shook our hands and exchanged greetings in the water!

We had told the ferry-man that we would leave Farwa at 2 o'clock and reluctantly we set off for the pier, but before we had gone far we were hailed by our ferry-man who had come to invite us to his house. As with all Libyans, his desire to give us hospitality was touching and very sincere and we were delighted at the prospect of seeing inside one of the palm huts. We learned that his name was Abu Bakr Malih Ftis and soon we were sitting in his home. The doorway to the hut led into a small yard with four rooms leading off—a bedroom, a kitchen, a room with a locked door and the living-room into which we were ushered. It was also the bedroom of his mother who was sitting cross-legged on her bed, and a small child was sleeping in another corner. The floor was cemented and scrupulously clean with a large rush mat spread near the door over which a mattress was quickly placed for us to sit on. Abu Bakr instructed his wife to prepare tea and while she was doing this we had the opportunity of studying the structure of the hut. The walls

were made of stout palm leaves which were woven and lashed together to form sturdy walls and the roof consisted of every conceivable kind of cardboard carton, paper and leaves. Although it was mid-afternoon with a temperature of about 105° F outside, the inside of the hut was surprisingly cool. Abu Bakr's wife was preparing the tea in a corner of the yard on a charcoal burner and we were able to watch her method of making tea. Two tea-pots are used and the tea and water are boiled in one of them, an enormous amount of sugar being added to the boiling liquid. The tea is then poured rapidly from one pot to the other several times and when perfection has been reached the dark-brown, thick, sickly-sweet brew is poured into small glasses. Our host brought us flat rolls and biscuits to eat with our tea, which we had to admit was a most refreshing drink! He proudly brought in a portable radio to entertain us, and quickly had his wife put a clean shirt on the 18 month-old baby before showing him off to his guests. Abu Bakr's wife, of course, remained outside as it is not usual for the woman to be present with guests except to prepare the food. Abu Bakr brought out the fishing net he was making and we were intrigued to see the manner in which he fastened one end to his toe to steady the net as he worked on it. We stayed in the house for about an hour and a half before Abu Bakr escorted us to the boat which was waiting at the end of the pier.

Finally we made our way back to the mainland leaving behind us a dream island where the way of life has remained almost unchanged for many years, and where the rush and tear of the world plays no part. There is no charge for the ferry and Abu Bakr was reluctant to accept the tip we offered him, but happily he eventually agreed. Farwa is a place where hospitality is considered far more important than money.

3. EAST TO MISURATA

There are two roads to Leptis Magna and Misurata. The more direct and less scenic is the northern route along the coast. We shall return by this road, and go out to Leptis via Tarhuna, with an extension to Beni Walid, and the pre-desert.

Leave Tripoli by Bab ben Gashir (the Ben Gashir Gate), which is a continuation of Shar'a 24 December and Shar'a as-Saidi. Fertile country surrounds you all the way to Ben Gashir, Suq as-Sabt (Saturday Market) and, 88 kms from Tripoli, Tarhuna. The name properly belongs only to the Qasr (or fort), the village being correctly known as al-Buerat. Tarhuna is very picturesquely situated; it is best seen from the Tripoli road immediately after the crest of the last hill. Its central square is large and impressive with a new mosque kept immaculately white and a hotel useful for those going on to Homs or Beni Walid. Don't miss 'Ain Sharshara, which is the cascade of Tarhuna, set in lovely surroundings some 4 kms out of the town. Always a delightful setting for a picnic, Tarhuna is at its best in the early Spring (February here!), when the blossoms are out. Someone in the main square will offer to show you the third-century mausoleum of Qasr ad-Dugha if you ask. This is some 8 kms out of Tarhuna left from the road to al-Qusbat and Homs; recommendable insofar as it is both larger and more impressive than Hanshir Suffit, near Yafran, another monument of the period.

Another 91 kms will find you in Beni Walid, south of Tarhuna. At the conjunction of latitude 31 degrees, 44 minutes

EAST TO MISURATA

North and longitude 14 degrees East, seven hundred feet above sea level, and one hundred and twelve miles south-east of Tripoli: the sum of these conditions applies to Beni Walid—a scattered area, rather than a town, of some 28,000 inhabitants.

From the remotest antiquity Beni Walid has been a flourishing agricultural centre, giving in good barley years a crop of up to 7,000 tons, olives from 15,000 trees, and dates from upwards of 6,000 palms. Peaches, apricots, almonds and figs abound.

Despite its distance from the coast, Beni Walid is slowly acquiring the amenities (and disadvantages) of the twentieth century.

A castle built in 1927 overlooks the main square adjoining the ancient Turkish castle, of which, however, practically nothing remains. This white battlemented fort always reminds me of a childhood toy. My mute lead soldiers carrying bayonets—were fixed in a menacing stance very different from that of the cordial sentry who will greet you in Beni Walid.

The Arab quarter of the upper town is concentrated around and to the east of the fort; here there is a covered market.

At night, there is 'nothing to do' in Beni Walid apart from the normal and necessary activities of men: reflection in solitude, reading by candlelight, walking on sand beneath the desert's brilliant stars, and conversation.

The hotel is run by a pleasant Italian family, and when I was last there, my wife and I were the only visitors. After a wash to clear the sand from our bodies we strolled down into the oasis and were making up the slope towards the old town when we were hailed by a group of four men, three between the age of thirty and forty (all of whom could speak and understand Italian) and an old man of eighty who was as spry and talkative as any of us. We drank tea at their invitation and completed their circle, sitting cross-legged while we discussed our families

and our jobs. What little Arabic I had was eagerly absorbed; my wife chatted easily in Italian with the younger men.

No rain in Beni Walid for five years! (It was in August 1964). When it comes, it will come, *in sha' Allah*, early in October, to revive the parched oasis. The atmosphere of expectancy is vividly felt as the Libyans gaze critically up at the ungenerous sky. They point to the palms while I sip my third tiny tumbler of green tea, and say that in November it will be beautiful. Audrey and I look incredulous, to see if they are joking—it is very beautiful now. We are shown the mosque, and drive through the oasis, past almond, orange, and olive trees until night is with us.

Outside the hotel, high above the oasis, we sit outside to drink *cappuccino* with the Italian family. It is dark, very warm (95–100° F), and utterly silent except for the muezzin intoning *Allahu akbar* (God is most great) from the mosque.

Next day it is already warm by nine o'clock, when we have continental breakfast (butter from Holland, jam from Grimsby, Italian coffee, and delicious local rolls): a last taste of Europe before the desert track.

Beni Walid is situated in the centre of the northern part of the Wadi Mardum-Wadi Sawfajjin valley-complex of Tripolitania. Fortified Roman farms can be found dotted around the whole area, but they are all off the asphalt roads, and before exploring them you are advised to read the instructions on desert travel at the end of this guide. At the southern edge of the town of Beni Walid you suddenly come to the pre-desert tracks, one forking right to Shumaikh (spelt 'Scemec' there), and the other forking left across the Wadi Sawfajjin as far as Ghirza.

Let's go first to Shumaikh, a distance of only forty-four kilometres. The green oasis of Beni Walid quickly disappears behind you, and the track becomes corrugated, impelling the cautious driver to leave it for the hard, smoother sand running

parallel with the track. Birds are very few, animals are non-existent, flowers and shrubs are so tiny that it is only when you look for them that you can discern them on the vast, flat terrain that is the pre-desert. There are no trees to give shade; the colours are the roast-brown of the earth and the pure blue of the sky. After about 21 kilometres, on the right-hand side of the track, one can climb up to a castle-like ruin near the track. It is strategically placed to command a view in all directions: the immensity of the desert and its silence affect one profoundly here. Another hour's slow driving along the southward track will bring one to Shumaikh, divided into the modern oasis, and the Roman site, with two very conspicuous and interesting fortified farms, of the type awarded to Libyan veterans after active service. By grants of land to old soldiers, the Roman colonizers retained their goodwill in times of peace, and secured their assistance in time of war. Due to their isolation, these farms were necessarily fortified against marauders from the south.

Taking the other track from Beni Walid, you will reach Ghirza after about 110 kms, across the Wadi Sawfajjin at the conjunction of the Wadis (properly 'widian' in the plural) Zamzam and Ghirza. There are about thirty-two fortified farms in the area whose occupation dates from the third century A.D. if not earlier, and up to at least the sixth century, and some splendid temple tombs and a fine obelisk tomb that was recently ruined by an earth tremor. The Wadi Ghirza and many other pre-desert wadis are crossed by ancient flood-conservation walls, some of which have recently been restored by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources of the Government. The visit to Ghirza is difficult and hazardous; the enterprising photographer Rosario Casella chartered a light aeroplane to visit Ghirza in 1965, and found that it could land easily in the surrounding desert; this could well be the most practical answer to the problem of Libya's great distances,

since from the touristic point of view, the beauty and magnificence of the sculptures and architecture of Ghirza is out of all proportion to the number of people who have ever seen it.

We return along the desert track to Beni Walid, and on to Tarhuna.

The low hills that follow the road from Tarhuna through Bir Miji and Wishtata, without traffic except for a Clinomobile and one lorry, have been eroded silently and patiently by the mild winds of millennia: one is absurdly reminded (absurd by contrast) of the Alps in Winter.

Here there is never snow; it is a landscape without peaks or grandeur, yet because of its immense solitude it possesses an awesomeness indissoluble from memories of the Matterhorn. At one point we stopped to admire these hills, gently curved, shimmering in the noon heat-haze. After lunch in the hotel-restaurant in Tarhuna, a siesta for an hour beneath an almond tree on the hill overlooking Tarhuna.

Now it is early afternoon, and we are leaving Tarhuna by the road to Homs via al-Qusbat (stress the last syllable). Al-Qusbat is 47 kms north-east, through pleasantly green countryside. Al-Qusbat is set among rich olive-groves, with the ruins of a fine sixteenth-century Spanish castle near it. The central square is one of the most attractive in Libya, immaculately white. We stopped to take a photograph of the castle and were immediately welcomed into a shop to drink tea and chat about our families. As a parting present, the hospitable shop-keeper insisted on giving us a dozen eggs.

The coastal road connecting Tripoli and Homs is soon reached now: you can return left to Tripoli if your time is short, but we will continue to Homs, a bare 26 kilometres from al-Qusbat.

Homs has a more equable climate than any other Tripolitanian town, and was used as a summer resort in Turkish times.

Homs has a good workshop, if your car needs attention, and a tyre-mechanic. Go to the Hotel, which is opposite the fine sandy beach, if you wish to reserve a room for the night. As there is no restaurant at Leptis Magna you will return also to Homs for lunch next day, if you have your own car. The Hotel Homs charged us L£4.470 for a double room with a view of the sea (L£2.500), and a dinner for two consisting of spaghetti (15 piastres each), roast-beef and peas (40 piastres each), fresh fruit (5 piastres each), a tea and a coffee (totalling 10 piastres) and a large bottle of mineral water (10 piastres). A 15 % service charge is included in the total. Our normal practice of placing two single beds together to make a double bed was reprimanded with a written notice 'Kindly do not waste the beds', which we have kept to this day.

LEPTIS MAGNA

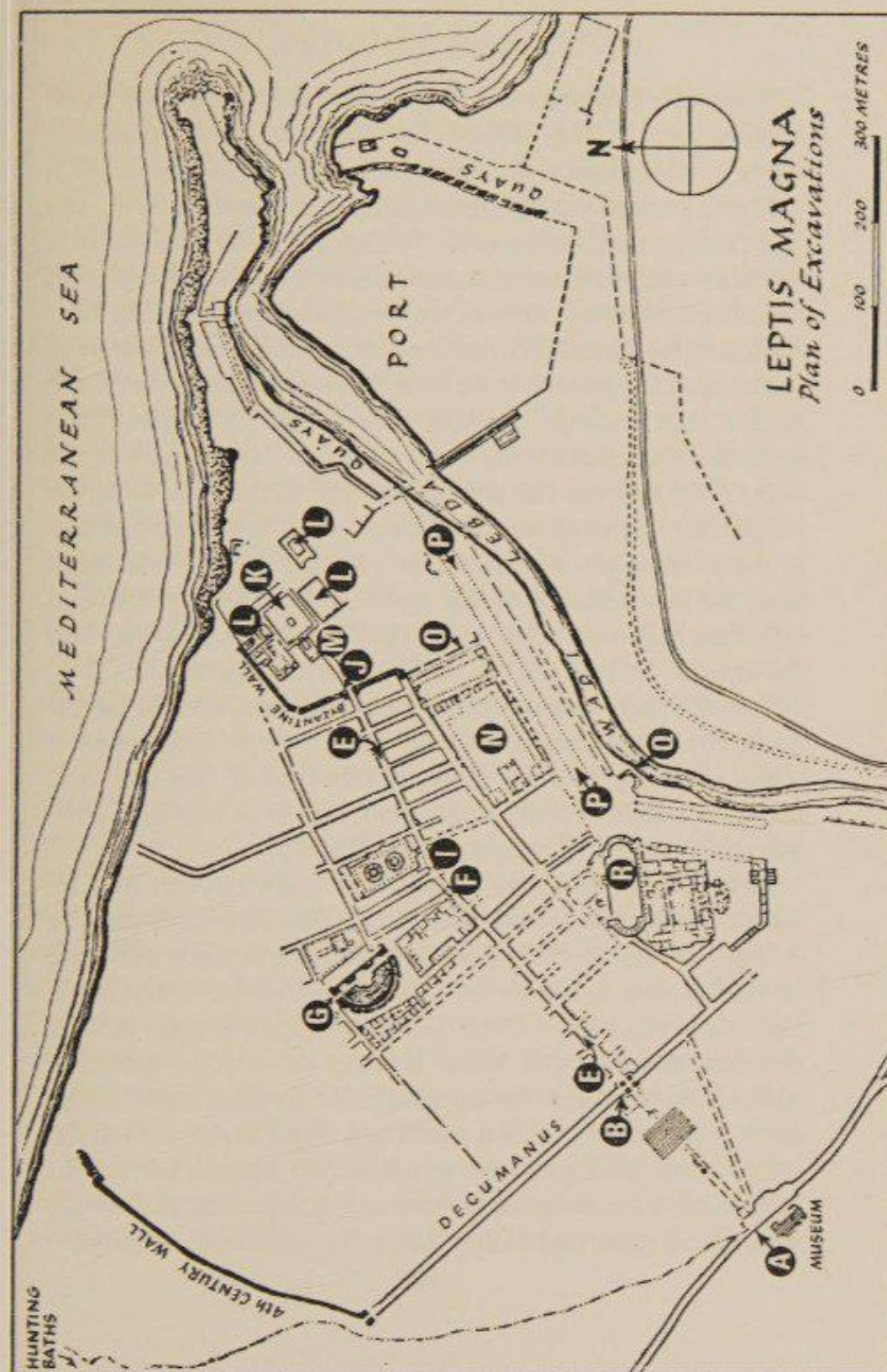
The Roman city of Leptis Magna (there is a Leptis Minor in Tunisia) can be the most rewarding part of your visit to Tripolitania or it can be the most exhausting. Before you begin, look at the plan of the excavations and determine how much you can see in the time at your disposal. Apart from the Museum, you have a choice of three areas: (a) the Main Site—in the centre; (b) the huge Port area; (c) the 'Hunting Baths', a good walk to the West.

For visitors interested in Roman painting, the Baths (now believed to have been for merchants rather than for hunters) is essential. To understand the significance of Leptis as a commercial city and outlet for animals, ivory, and other African exports, the port must be examined. There is also a circus, further east of the port, and an amphitheatre. But for the average visitor, a short visit to the Museum and a leisurely walk around the central area will occupy a full and fascinating day. Haynes' *Antiquities of Tripolitania* is the best general

EAST TO MISURATA

source for the ruins, but there is a new book introduced by the Italian scholar Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli called *Buried City*, a large illustrated record of the site, published in English by Weidenfeld and Nicolson at 4 guineas, and in Italian by Mondadori at lire 7,500. The following itinerary will serve to save your time, but it is no substitute for Haynes or Bandinelli.

Approaching from Homs, the entrance to the excavations is on the right, and the Museum opposite, on the left. My advice is to park under the trees near the entrance (A), and then walk down the *cardo* to the Severan Arch (B). If you have difficulty in visualizing ancient sites or buildings, look hard at this, and when you are back in the Museum compare your memory of the present state with the model displayed in the end room. Mental reconstruction like this will help in imagining the glory that was Leptis Magna in its heyday, when Septimius Severus, the Roman emperor born here (who was to die in the less congenial climate of York) honoured the place of his birth by inaugurating the New Forum (N) and the adjacent Basilica (O). Continuing along the *cardo* (E-E) you will arrive next at Trajan's Arch (F). Turn left here to the theatre (G), and climb to the top to admire the statue of Ceres, who watches the waves break on the Southern Mediterranean shore beyond the theatre, and beyond the city itself, to the sea that leads to Rome. Returning to the *cardo*, you now come to the Arch of Tiberius (I), the earliest of these three arches. Left is the evocative market-place. The circular kiosks are aesthetically pleasing. Especially interesting are the contemporary standard measures on stone, and the grooves which bite deep into the soft local stone. These grooves were caused by the rope which drew up the bucket when the stones were originally placed around the mouth of the well. You can see how this happened by examining an ancient example *in situ* at the mouth of a cistern in the pavement of the courtyard where the market building stands.



There is a Byzantine wall at Leptis as at Sabratha; the sixth-century gate (J) leads through this wall past one of Justinian's churches (M) to the earlier temples (L) and the Old Forum (K).

If you go back through the Byzantine gate and turn left, you will find yourself in the great Basilica (O), and here you will wish to examine the magnificent sculptures on the pilasters, and superb inscriptions. Now to the even more breathtaking New Forum of the Severi (N). As usual, the Forum is an open court surrounded by a covered walk. At one end, shops are clearly made out; at the other, there are the remains of a temple. If you leave the Forum at the opposite side you will see part of the street (P-P) that ran through the town from the port. Compare the present course of the Wadi Lebda with its probable course in the Severan period, when this colonnaded street was built. Near the southern end of the street, look for the nymphaeum (Q), then walk west again to the stadium, or *palaestra* (R), and the adjacent baths of the time of Hadrian (2nd century A.D.).

Tantalizingly, so much of Leptis is still unexcavated, but the Antiquities Department, together with foreign archaeological teams, continue to work at small segments of this vast city. Better to excavate slowly and thoroughly, as at Leptis, than to hasten the work at the expense of care and accuracy.

From Leptis, the road to Misurata leads through Suq al-Khamis (Thursday Market) to Zliten (the Roman 'Subgoli'). Around Zliten the varied landscapes are particularly attractive to visitors who like oasis scenery, camels, and country life in general. If you stay at Homs Hotel for Leptis Magna, another day-excursion can well be made along the coast to Misurata, with a picnic lunch on the roadside in Zliten oasis, which boasts about a quarter of a million palms and about 80,000 olive trees.

In Zliten, having arrived at the central square, ask for the Jam'a Sidi 'Abd as-Salam al-Asman, a mosque founded by the saint of that name and dating from 1562. It is sober in design—

simplicity itself—and is notable for the annual pilgrimage. If you need a comfortable blanket, try the little shops of Zliten. These are dark and cool in summer; outside and above them trail huge vines, which form an original 'covered market'. Market day in Zliten is Sunday, when large black earthenware pitchers are the speciality. Zliten is about 55 kms from Misurata, the easternmost town of our tour. Request whomever shows you the mosque to direct you to the Roman villa of Dar Buk Amaira. Here, just on the shore, are the mosaics not hitherto brought to the Antiquities Museum in Tripoli, where the best are on view. By contrast with the delicate mosaics of Sabratha, these specimens are crude in conception and workmanship, but the most outstanding show a vivid appreciation of the life of the period, and help to broaden one's knowledge of Roman mosaics.

Misurata's port (then called Thubactis) was important in Roman and medieval times, but today Misurata Marina, about eleven kms from the town centre, has receded in importance (though the beaches are fine), while urban Misurata has developed into the most important town of Western Libya after Tripoli. A double room in the Hotel Misurata cost us 80 piastres, with a further pound for the evening meals and 60 piastres for the breakfasts. A very dependable car workshop can be found on the road out to Tawurgha—in the Fezzan direction. In the Middle Ages, Misurata and its port were used by Venetian traders. Now the trade consists of rugs and carpets made here and sold both in the town's own market and in Tripoli and abroad. Wander round the suqs (the plural is more properly 'aswaq') at your own pace and select your souvenirs. I bought here a traditional drum shaped like a vase and open at one end: it is painted a colourful green and has a pleasant resonance.

We have already discussed the road back to Zliten and Homs, however, instead of bearing left on the road to Tarhuna we continue on the coast road which will link up with Tajura and

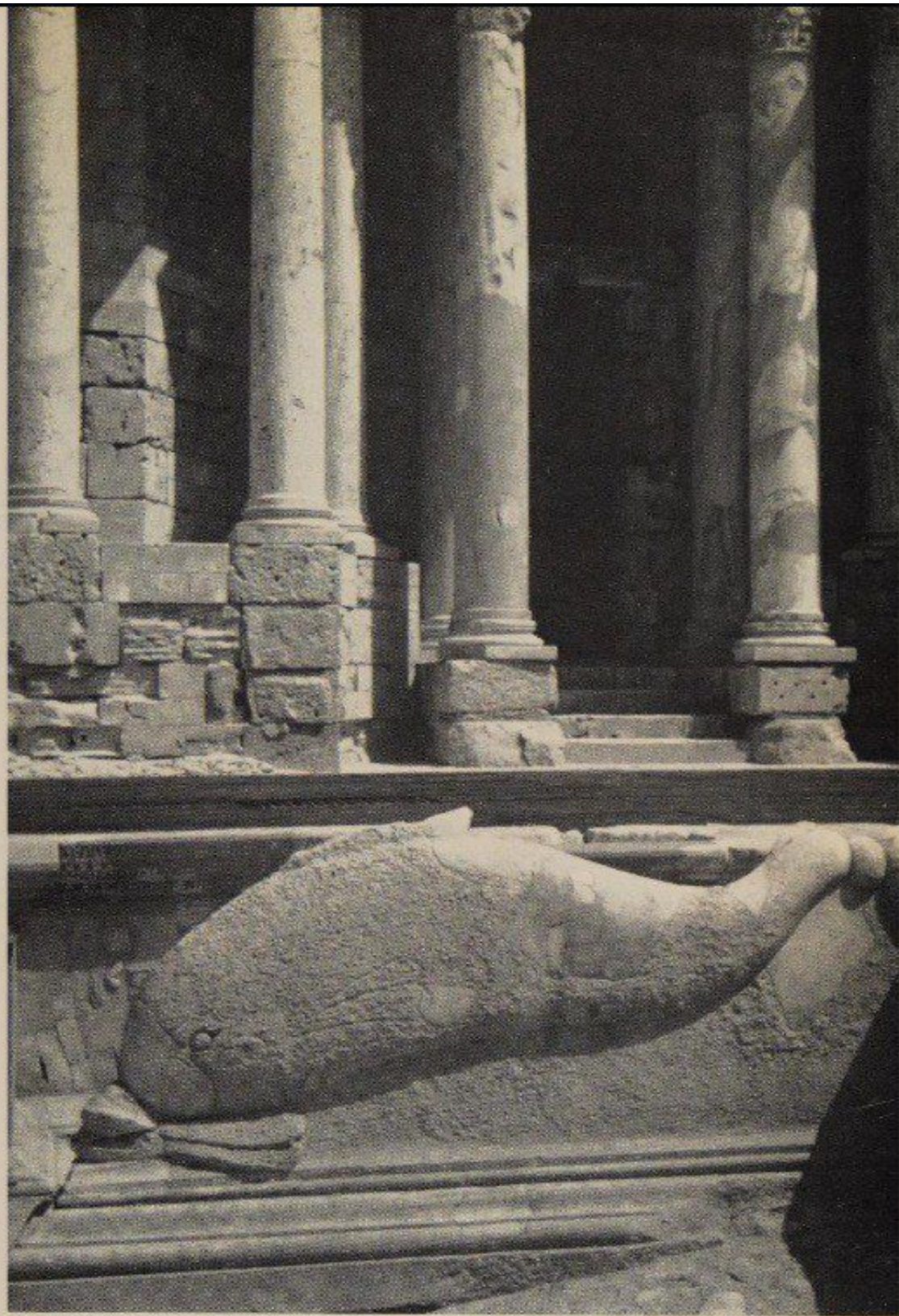
EAST TO MISURATA

Tripoli, noticing on the right, two kilometres before the junction, the region of Ras al-Margab. Here, on a hill 180 metres high, a Turkish fort is still visible.

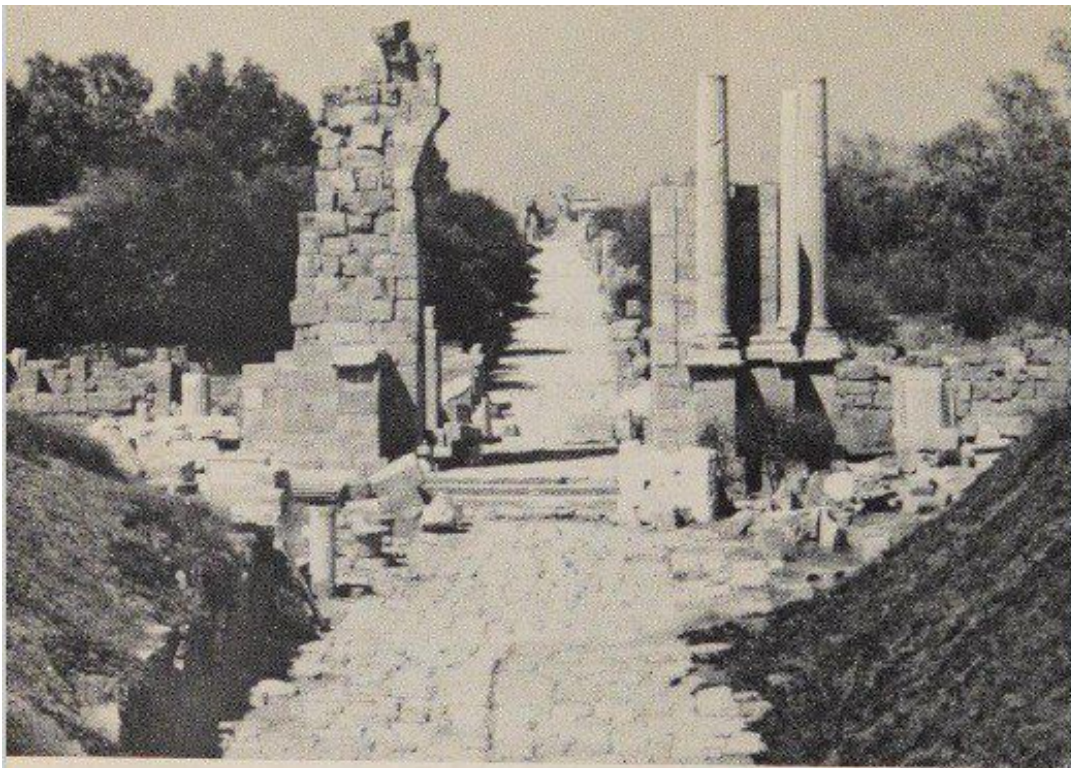
The Mediterranean comes into view on numerous occasions as you drive up the winding road to Jabal an-Nab, then shortly after you reach the village of Ghanima. Now you are driving through a vast fertile area of olive groves all the way to Garabulli, 46 kilometres from Tajura and 62 from Tripoli.

ISLE OF PIGEONS

If you are a strong swimmer, and enjoy a secluded swim, find the track down to the sea at km. 89 on the Homs road from Tripoli. Very few Tripolitanians know this spot, which is ideal for a picnic; the rocklike island, small as it is, can be reached on foot at low tide, and by a confident swimmer at high tide. It is one of the very few islands near the Libyan coast.

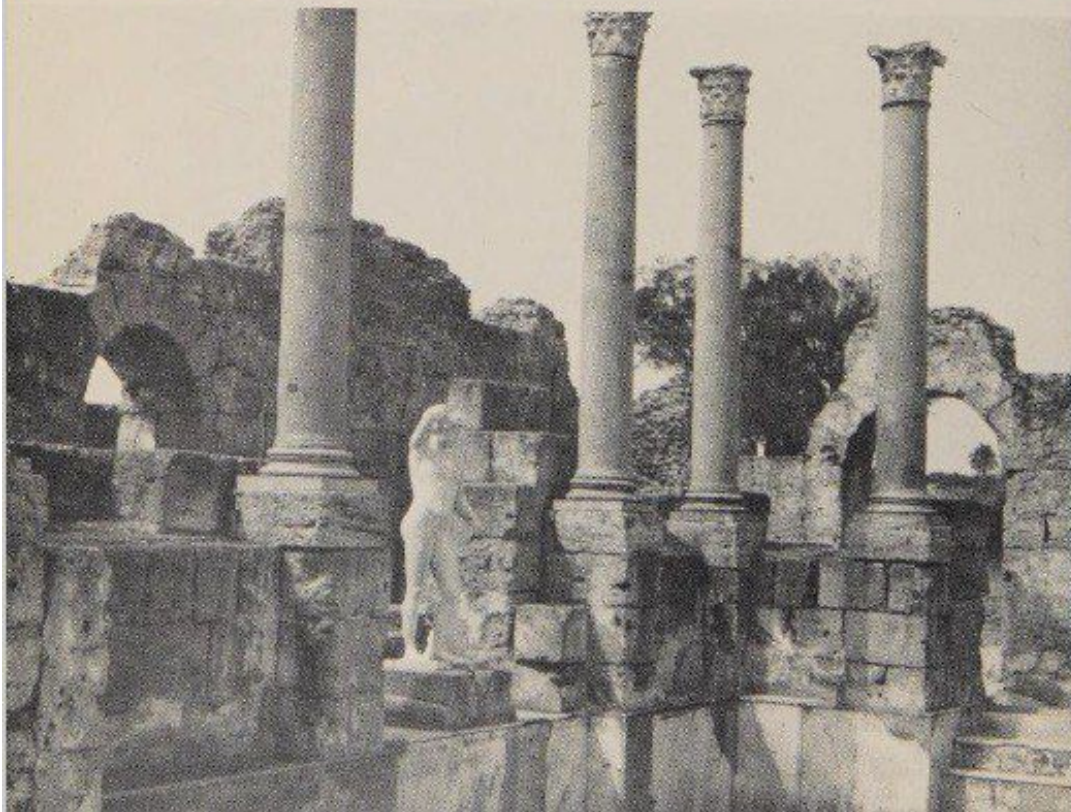


Sabratha: dolphin in Roman theatre



Leptis Magna: arch of Septimius Severus

Leptis Magna: baths



4. THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS

We left Tripoli on a Saturday afternoon in June in the middle of a fierce ghibli with the temperature already over 100°F. Having packed all our provisions in the car we set off along the Swani road.

The first part of our journey led us through the fertile oasis where on either side of the tree-lined road there is rich agricultural land. Between Swani and Azizia we met a small camel-train accompanied by some women who were completely enveloped by their brightly-coloured hulies. By the time we reached Azizia it was even hotter than in Tripoli and the general feeling of the local people was that the only thing to do was to sit down until it became cooler—so they sat outside their shops by the road in little groups, and here and there we saw signs of tea being brewed. **Azizia's name is world-famous for its temperature of 134.6°F on 13 September 1922, recognized by the U.S. National Geographic Society, but not by the Ministry of Communications of the Kingdom of Libya, who believe it is a mistake.** If it is not a mistake, Azizia may claim to be the hottest place in the world. Amilcare Fantoli, writing in 1923, records a shade temperature there of 56° in the shade, which would be about 132.8°F, but he gives no date for this measurement. Azizia is the last town before the mountains which now lay somewhere ahead of us across the vast plain, but as yet we could only peer in the distance for our first glimpse. At last out of the heat haze we could distinguish a faint outline of hills rising above the sandy-red plain, but our road still stretched ahead in a

THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS

seemingly endless ribbon. The hills were becoming larger now and as they rose steadily higher in a smooth plateau, they gave the impression of having been dropped accidentally in the middle of the desolate plain. These at last were the Western Mountains, comprising the Jabal Nafusa (named after a Berber tribe), and Jabal Yafran, which together form the Jabal Gharbia, Jabal Garian, Jabal Tarhuna, and the hills of Msellata, near Homs. How did we cross this mountainous obstacle? For we could see no point at which our road entered the hills, and nowhere could we see any sign of it winding upwards. However, we eventually found that we were climbing, and then suddenly the bends in the road became steeper and high walls had been built to safeguard the motorist on this twisting, climbing corkscrew. Even an air-cooled engine needs a rest, especially when the air is ghibli-hot, and so we stopped—drew in our breath and wondered if we had really come along that fine thread of road which was winding away below us.

While the whole of this run is a delight for geologists, probably the most interesting sight is that of Kaf Takut, a volcanic dyke some seven hundred metres high. The climb is easy, and specimens of basalt and phonolite with felspar crystals can be gathered.

Then we were driving through the main street of Garian with its shops on either side and its neat square ahead of us where we could see the Mosque, the Police Station and the Hotel. Stopping at the hotel we rang the bell, and were admitted by a somewhat surprised receptionist who obviously wondered why anyone should be travelling during a ghibli! The hotel was cool—the water cold—our room pleasant—what more could we ask? But we had more pressing things to do than sit in a hotel—there were troglodyte dwellings in the neighbourhood which we had to see before darkness fell. A few kilometres from Garian is the village of Tighrinna, and leaving the car we followed a track

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which led us to a troglodyte settlement. These troglodyte houses are dug deep into the ground, the rooms being situated round a central pit which serves as a light source. Entrance is through a deep sloping shaft some distance from the visible square pit. The earth is very light and easily moved and so a troglodyte house is comparatively easy to build, very cheap and of course very cool in summer. We climbed a mound and peered down into the pit of one of the houses where we could see doorways leading into various rooms, some washing hanging on a clothes-line and some members of the family looking out of the doorways. There are no fences round the tops of these deep pits and walking in this area in the dark would be an extremely hazardous business. Back to Garian which was now in darkness except for a brilliant moon, a warm light from the mosque, shining white in the moonlight, and the lights from the open shop doorways. Shopping in Garian at 9 p.m. is a pleasant experience and our varied purchases included a saucepan, a flour sieve, a necklace, some films and a tin of cherries. And so, wearily, to bed where we heard the muezzin from the mosque calling the people to the last prayers of the day.

Next morning we set off at 8 a.m. and were soon at the settlement of Abu Zayan, ten kilometres from Garian on the Yafran road, from which an interesting excursion can be made to the oasis of Mizda.

There is good evidence for the existence of a Roman road almost directly south from Oea (Roman Tripoli) to Mizda. That it ran near the modern road is proved by the discovery of milestones along the route. One of these, dating from the rule of Caracalla, has a long inscription and has been re-erected at its supposed original location, 28 km. south of Abu Zayan, and is easily observed close to the road in this flat landscape. Mizda—the 'Musti Kome' of Ptolemy according to Heinrich Barth—lies a further fifty kilometres farther south of this milestone. Like

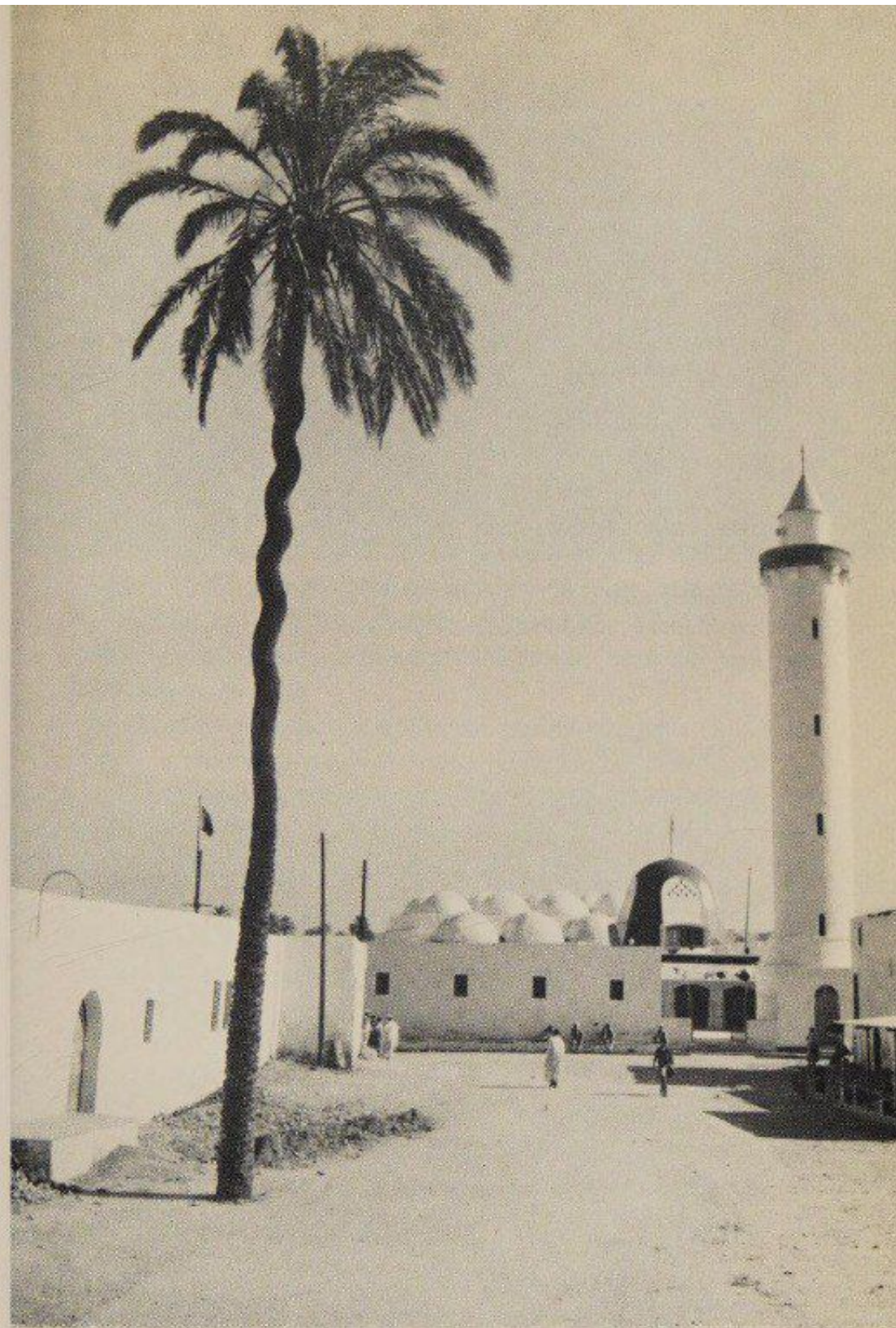
THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS

Beni Walid, the oasis of Mizda is situated on the very brink of the desert. Its principal communications are a hard-top road extending through Garian to Tripoli northwards, and a track leading southwards to the oases of the Wadi ash-Shati, in Fezzan. The track goes through al-Qaryat ash-Sharqia, which means 'eastern village'. As in the majority of Saharan oases, where the town-plan has not been changed since medieval times, al-Qaryat ash-Sharqia is dominated by its fortress. Here the fortress was originally Roman, later incorporated into the structure of the twentieth-century Italian building. Pursuing a track to the west, to al-Qaryat al-Gharbia ('western village'), we come to a much larger fort, indicating that this oasis was the more frequented of the two. Travellers south to Fezzan would have skirted the arid Hammada al-Hamra' (Red Desert) if possible, passing from al-Qaryat ash-Sharqia to Brak in Fezzan by the eastern edge of the Hammada.

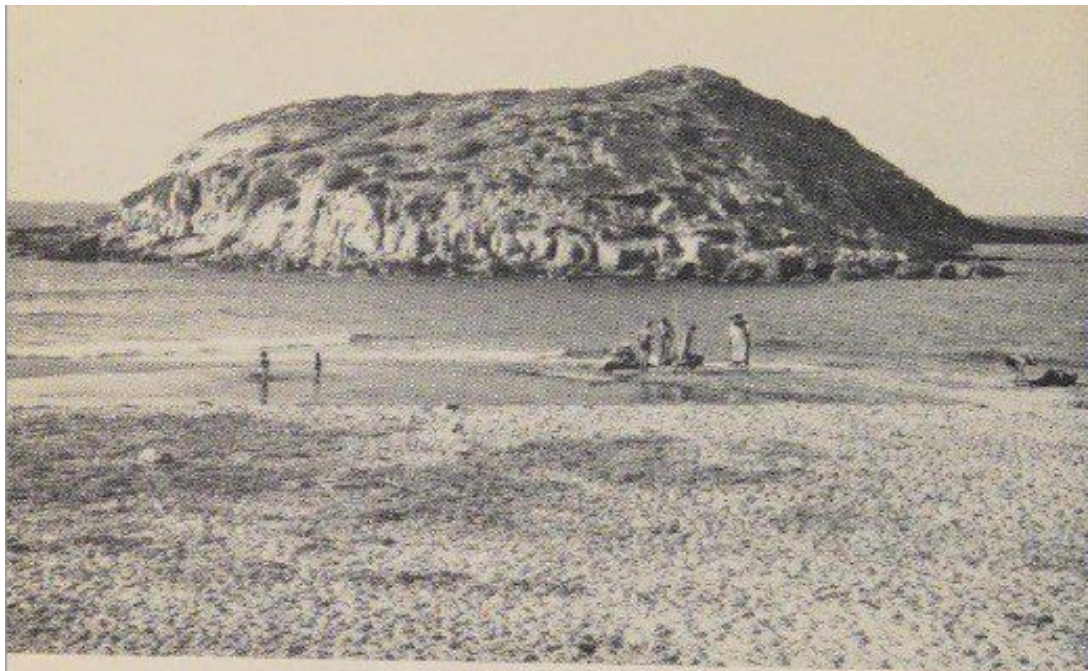
Rock-drawings can be seen, by anyone with access to a Land Rover, about sixty kilometres south-west of Mizda. Pick up a guide in the oasis, and make for the prehistoric encampment of Wadi al-Khal. The site cuts into the escarpment of the Hammada, and is documented in the Prehistory Museum in Tripoli Castle.

Of the nine early Christian churches so far identified in Tripolitania, probably the best-preserved can be seen about 2 kilometres north-west of the mudiria, or governor's residence, of al-Asab'a (the Roman 'Vinaza'), further along the Garian-Yafran road. To reach it, leave the main road west of the mudiria. You will find on the edge of the plateau a three-naved Byzantine basilica of the Justinian age. The flight of steps leading to the entrance, and the pronaos, indicate that the building had some importance. Its fluted columns have Ionic capitals.

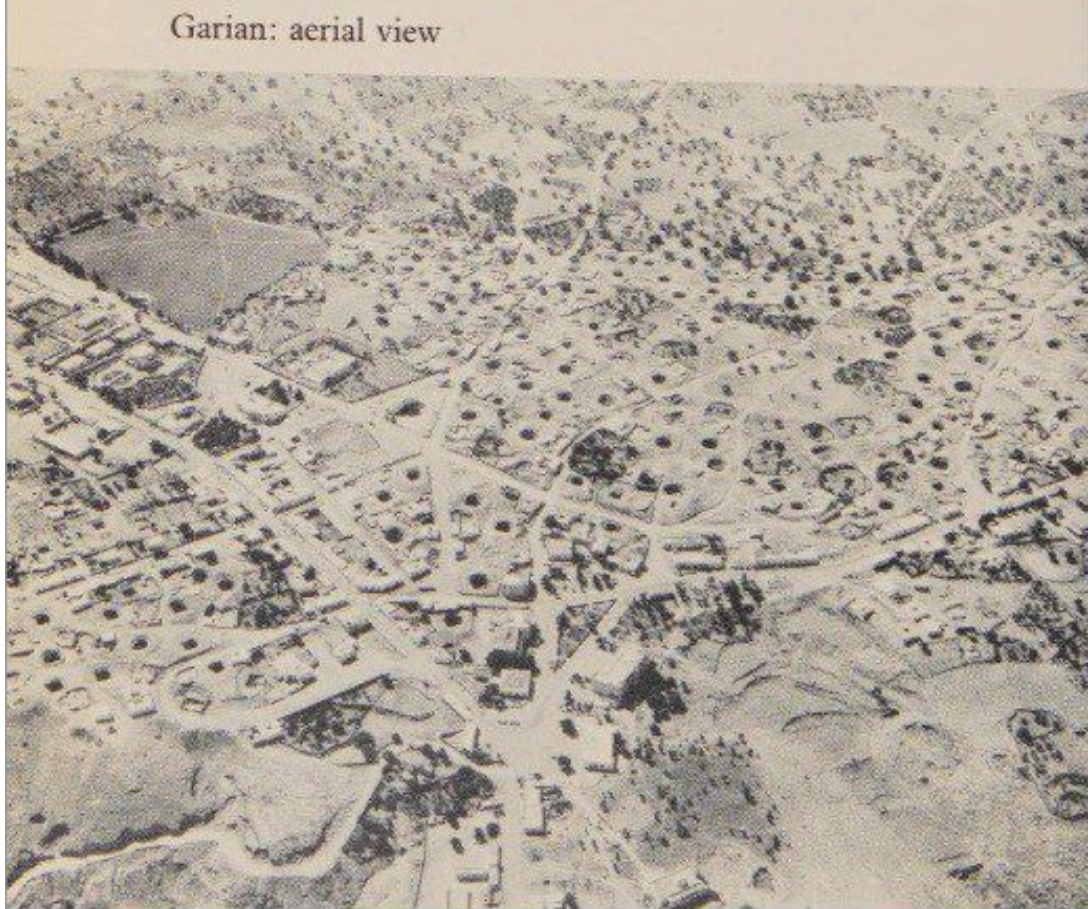
You are now in the interior of the Roman *limes*, or border of



Zliten: Mosque of Sidi' Abd as-Salam al-Asman



Isle of Pigeons



Garian: aerial view

THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS

Tripolitania during imperial times. The *limes* has been the object of intensive study by scholars during recent years; it was a zone into which northward movement was controlled in the early third century by the three legionary forts already mentioned, and later after their abandonment, by semi-military farmers housed in numerous farmhouses in favourably-located desert wadis. A defensive system of one kind or another was essential to secure the safe passage of travellers and wares between the seaports and the hinterland, an object constantly in the minds of Roman emperors from Septimius Severus to Diocletian.

The province of 'Tripolitana' thus demarcated enjoyed its most prosperous period, until modern times, during the Empire. In the year 533, the legions of Belisarius restored order in the district, and Justinian reorganized the administration, entrusted the civil government to a *praeses* and the military government to a *dux*.

Rejoining the main road to Yafran we cross a wadi and, if time allows, at the cross-roads shortly afterwards turn off to Kikla, some 15 kilometres away. The village was destroyed on several occasions by the Turks during the Berber revolt of 1845-55, but has always been rebuilt on the same site. Continuing on the mountain road we can just discern, on the right, the Mausoleum of Suffit, placed high on a hill surveying the whole region. The car can be driven almost to the foot of the *hanshir*, or mausoleum. Behind the monument, and level with the ground, is a crypt. The reddish-grey building consists of two floors, the lower slightly wider than the upper, which is ornamented at all four corners by slender pilasters surmounted by delicate capitals and a sculptured cornice. This interesting tomb has been restored to prevent its complete collapse. The tomb dates to about the third century, but nothing is known of the prosperous Roman citizen who was buried in it.

THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS

Eating breakfast in the car as we drove along in the cool morning air, we felt sure that the ghibli was over—but we were wrong, and by 10 o'clock the hot wind was again blowing and the sun was blazing down. Our first excitement of the day was to encounter a very large camel-train: we were greeted by the owner who shook us warmly by the hand and told us in Arabic that he was about to milk the camels. The country around us was pleasant agricultural land and we saw several modern tractors working in the fields. At every corner the scenery changed in a never-ending kaleidoscope, and soon the clusters of palm trees began to thicken and we realized that we were approaching the beautiful Wadi Rumia. The name 'Rumia' is from the Arabic 'Rumi' which is used for Romans in particular and for all the population of Europe in general. The name is thus vivid evidence of the Roman penetration of the mountains. In the winter the wadis, which are deep channels, fill with rain-water from the hills, and even in mid-June we could see water at the bottom of the wadi where crowds of camels, sheep and goats were drinking thirstily. One cannot recapture sound as easily as one can keep photographs, but the peace of this place was incredible—the gentle noise of the animals—an occasional call from one shepherd to another—then silence. From Rumia our road took us above a massive valley worn away by the winds of several million years, and on either side of the valley the bare strata showed clearly the geological formation of the area. Deep down below us were scattered a few houses and clusters of palms pointing to the existence of the water supply. On again until we reached Yafran (meaning 'all white') where there was all the activity of a hill town serving the population for many miles around. The town is 1875 ft. above sea-level. Men were coming and going on loaded donkeys, stopping to exchange greetings and news in the street, and everywhere barakans were flying in the strong sandy wind.

THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS

Across from the main town of Yafran is the Berber town, which from a distance gives the impression of being a collection of tumble-down houses, but this is because the roofs are lower than the tops of the outside walls in order to provide a storage area for the rain when it falls.

Yafran is the scene of the exploits of the Berber leader Jum'a bin Khalifa. In 1845 he organized the revolt of the tribes of Yafran against the Turks when the latter invaded: his guerrilla warfare succeeded in defeating the Turks for many years, and his victories are still related in the mountains. When he was eventually captured and taken to Turkey as a prisoner, he made a daring escape, and walked home all the way through Asia Minor, Egypt, and Cyrenaica. It was on this very road to Ghadames that bin Khalifa was seized by the Turks in 1859 and sentenced to death.

Little but memories remain of the ancient city of Yafran, but you can still see the old castle (not the Turkish fort, recently demolished) imposing even in its state of ruin. The Berbers of this area are Ibadites, and the mosque of Yafran is bare and severe in its interior in accordance with Ibadite principles. The new Hotel Rumia is built on the site of the Turkish castle. From its rooms you have a dramatic view over the plateau as far (it is claimed) as Fezzan. A lunch there will cost you 55 piastres per person, including the service charge. While in Yafran, visit the market and try to see a craftsman weaving a barakan, or burnous. To reach Jadu from Yafran, you must return 9 kilometres to the Rumia road, and take a right fork, with a signpost showing Jadu (63 kms) and Nalut (188 kms). At this point you are 150 kms from Tripoli.

At the 183rd kilometre, try to find time to turn off 3 kms to az-Zintan, a fertile area of olives. I say 'area' rather than town, for az-Zintan is a group of villages composed mainly of troglodytic (cave-) dwellings, cut in the sides of the valleys.

THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS

Look particularly for the principal village, Awlad 'Isa, which is the marketing centre for the surrounding district. Az-Zintan seems to have been rather important in Roman times, since we find the name 'Zenteos' mentioned in the dependable *Itinerary* of Antoninus. This itinerary is the only authority on the topography of ancient Africa that we know in so complete a form. It describes a journey along the coast from Tangier to Carthage, a distance of 1839 Roman miles (2720 kms.), and on to Gabes and Leptis Magna, another 605 miles along the arc of the Tripolitanian Jabal's boundary. You will still, if you look hard enough, find some imported marble and square blocks of stone which suggest the presence of Roman legionaries and colonists in az-Zintan. And do not forget the medieval castle.

Jadu is 2,160 feet above sea-level, a couple of kilometres off on the right of the road. It is situated on three hills that dominate the valley of Janawan. Jadu resembles Yafran and Nalut in its eagle's-nest position, which is due to the safety such heights afforded the Berbers when they were being harried by rival tribes. There is a small, inexpensive hotel. In Jadu look at the Turkish castle with crenellated walls, and the other sides of the cool, white square. A peculiar interest of Jadu is that it is a holy city to the Ibadites; there are consequently many mosques, and in the Qur'anic schools the precepts of the founder, Abdullah ben Ibad, are taught. We drove slowly through the small town and followed the road as it began to wind steeply downwards as this was the edge of the Jabal Nafusa—we had crossed the Western Mountains. The descent was very steep and as we drove cautiously round the first few bends we were amazed at the panorama which was spread before us, for there, unexpectedly, was the most beautiful village imaginable, and stretching behind it a vast red-brown plain. The edge of the escarpment was sheer on each side of the village and palm trees were rich where they clustered round the mountain spring of

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'Ain Tmughet. The village was Janawan, a name rarely mentioned in guidebooks, but surely the gem of the Western Mountains. Having made the descent we were anxious to explore the village, but the intense heat made it impossible to leave the car for more than a few seconds, for we learned that the temperature was over 120°F. Regretfully we left the magic of Janawan and continued along the road to Tripoli. The desert was all around us now and there was no shelter from the fierce sun and scorching wind, but our road was good and we made rapid progress towards Shakshuk, where a pleasant oasis provided relief from the desert.

The mountains had disappeared behind us now and it was difficult to believe that they ever existed as we looked out on the never-ending plain which was now leading towards Qasr al-Haj.

5. AWAY TO GHADAMES!

If you like to see the wonders of the world the easy way, call on Kingdom of Libya Airlines in Tripoli's Castle Square when you arrive in Tripoli. Three regular weekly flights to Ghadames, which began in June 1966, represent a great travel bargain. During the summer Ghadames is too hot, and flights are not recommended, but during the other three seasons, and especially in the winter, the trip to the Pearl of the Desert is an unforgettable break from city life.

The flight to Ghadames by Fokker Friendship takes two hours from Idris Airport. From Ghadames airstrip a Land Rover is available to transport passengers to the Hotel, but as the distance is no more than a kilometre, it is advisable to walk. Dinner is served in the hotel at 7, after which the evening is free for exploring the oasis and the covered streets.

Breakfast is at 8, after which you can, if you wish, go on an accompanied tour of the town and Tuareg village, returning to the hotel for lunch at 1. During the afternoon you can see Tuareg dances, and hear the haunting music of the pipes.

For some L£25, accommodation, full board, and the two-way flights are paid for. I have found this method of going to Ghadames smooth and utterly delightful: this is the way to see the Pearl of the Desert if you cannot travel rough.

But in my opinion Ghadames is too strange, too exotic, to be reached by the levelling aeroplane. It should be reached as it has always been reached during the course of its savage colourful history: by land. To do the journey safely, however, you must

AWAY TO GHADAMES!

observe the rules of desert travel, since the asphalt road finishes at Tiji, a little beyond al-Jawsh. These rules, or essential precautions, are summarized in Appendix I; please do not ignore any one of them, or your pleasure-trip may end in tragedy.

The itineraries to follow to Ghadames depend on whether you have already visited the Western Mountains; if not, set off for Jadu via Garian and Yafran—the route described in the previous chapter. If you are in a hurry, you may repeat the outward journey, across the Jafara, via Bir al-Ghanam. It is less interesting scenically, but very much quicker, and you will encounter even less traffic. In any case, the itinerary described below continues from Jadu, where we left the Western Mountains in the last chapter to return to Tripoli.

To reach Nalut from Jadu you have the choice of going by Kabau (with its interesting castle), but I prefer the easier road to Tiji: it is asphalted all the way to Tiji, which is more than a third of the distance. If you stop here, to gather courage for the difficult track ahead, wander around the oasis, and try to find the vestiges of Roman construction. I confess they have eluded me so far! From al-Jawsh to Tiji the hills gradually become lower, and as we follow the gently undulating course of the road we recall the Jafara stretch. You will be astonished to see how quickly vegetation can spring up here, after quite a brief shower; it will die just as easily, of course. There are few landmarks on this road, so you will not miss the Qara (rock) Awlad Abu 'Isa about km. 321. A murabit's tomb is at the foot of this fantastic pyramid, surrounded by a small cemetery.

TO NALUT

Past this gigantic 'stalactite' the scene changes. A fantastic girdle of mountains surrounds the plateau, and the car switches

AWAY TO GHADAMES!

through crooked gorges and hump-hillocks which are awe-inspiring in their strangeness. These mountains of the west have a hard crust at the top, and weather away beneath this surface, forming great 'mushrooms'. The valleys widen, the mountain walls fall down in precipitous ravines, water filters its way through every crevice in the rare winter torrents, causing vertical fissures in the rocks. The summits gradually weaken and suddenly fall, undermined from below, with a great crash that distributes rocks unevenly over the plain. So the scene becomes even more unreal in appearance as the broken rocks reveal sharp cuts like wounds—the unweathered interior of the old rock.

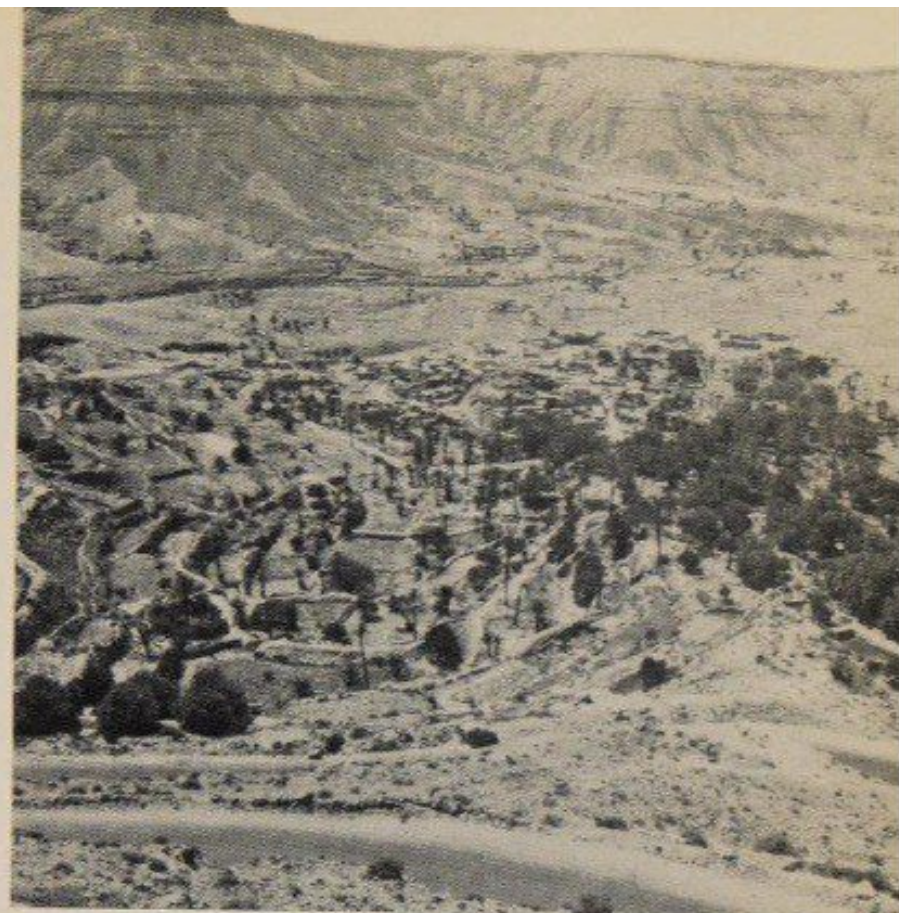
The Berbers have given human characteristics to these shapes: *kaf* (head) is one; *kechem* (nose) is another.

Then everything changes again. Tall palms, with their crests flattened by strong winds, appear on the horizon, then closer. Dusty shrubs become more common, and at last we are on the great level plain; like most Berber towns, Nalut, which appears to be at the end of the world, was built high to resist invading tribes. It was founded in the eleventh century, but the **Berber tribes of Nalut** made at least three different moves, each time to a higher, less vulnerable position. As you would imagine, the first site is to be traced to the chief water source: it is 500 metres to the south-east of the modern town, and is the site of the imposing castle of Nalut.

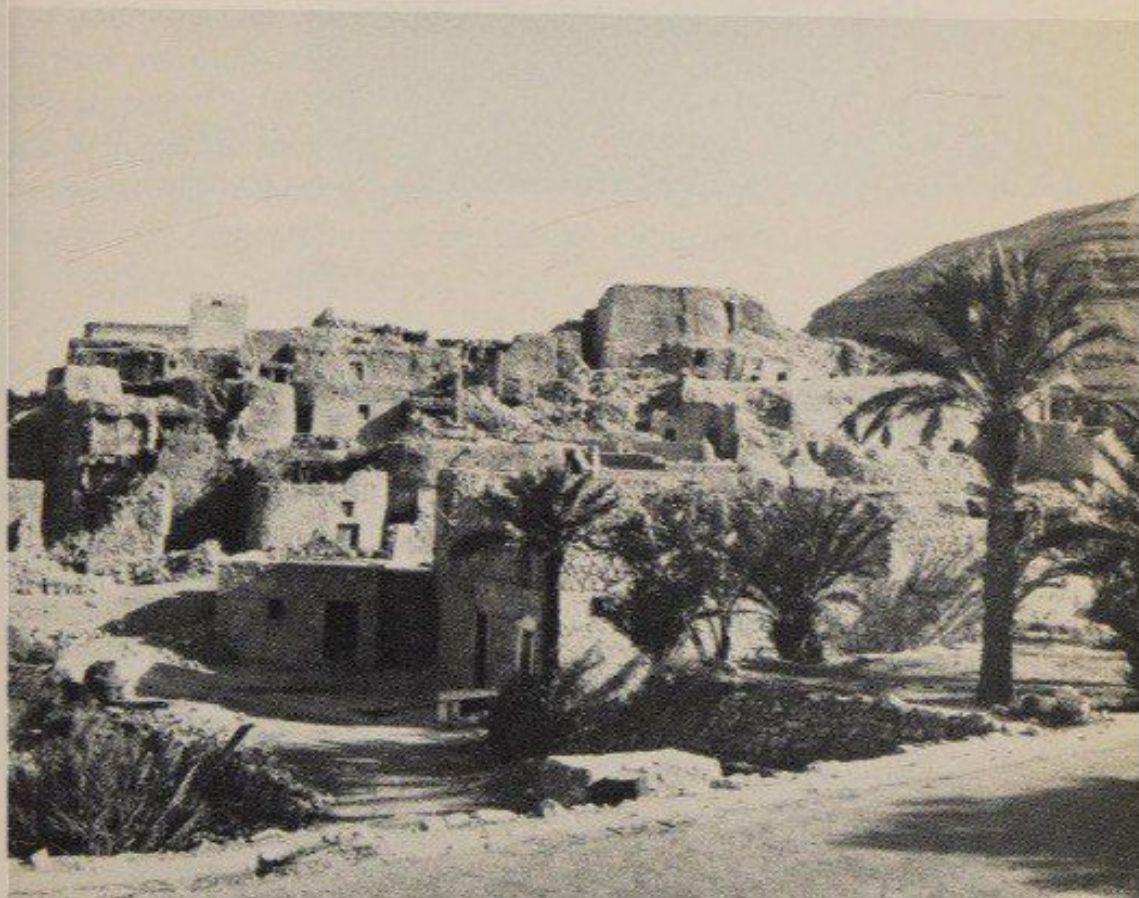
Once the seat of lords of mountain and desert, this castle is now as deserted as the chateau of Les Baux, but I would equate its construction more nearly to that of the Pelasgic walls of Perugia.

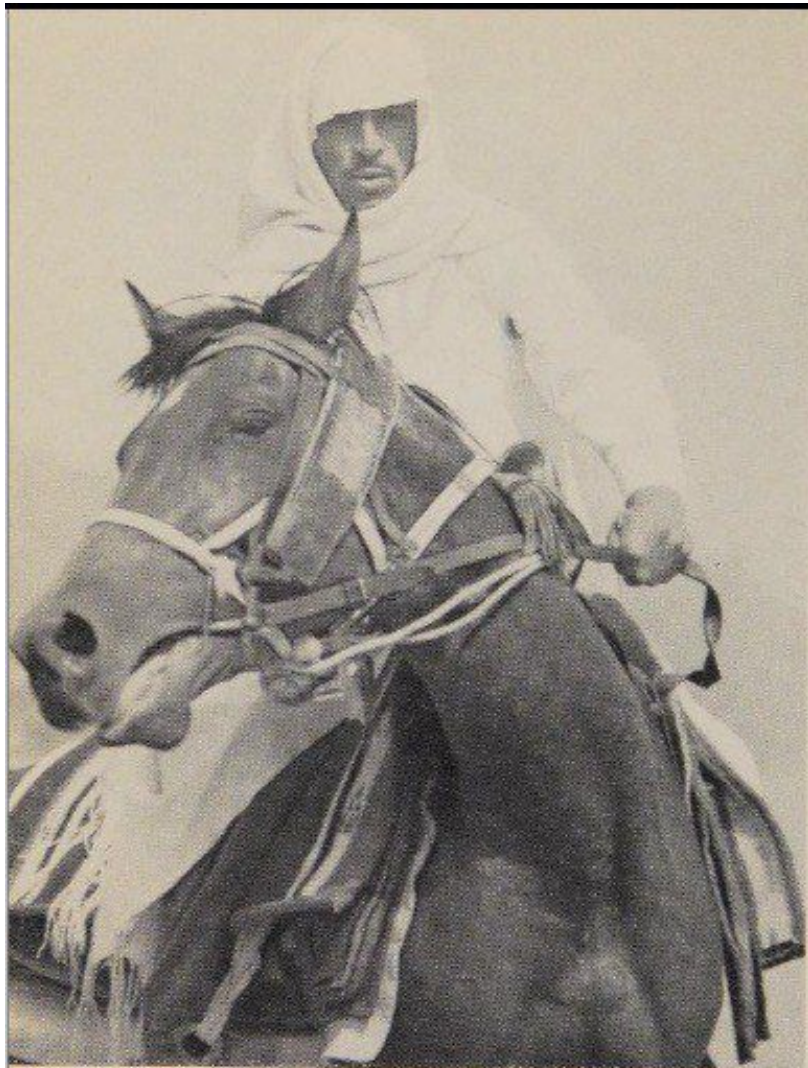
Climb up to it; you will be astonished at the sudden transition from its external appearance (that of a fortress) to its internal appearance (that of a granary). Naturally enough, during sieges a granary was essential, but it is probable that the three hundred or so cells, each about three feet cubed, evolved as a communal

Jadu:
view down to
Janawan

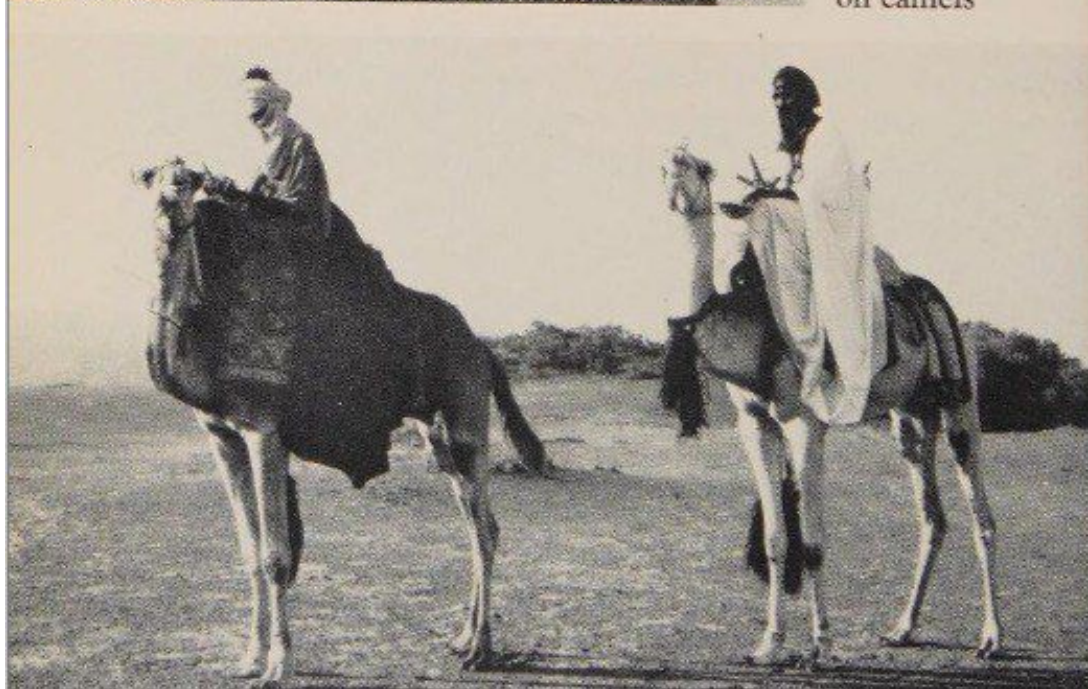


Janawan





Horseman
from the
Western
Mountains



Tuareg riders
on camels

AWAY TO GHADAMES!

storehouse for the Berber families' wheat, barley and oil—in fact their whole wealth. An interesting anticipation of the private safe-deposit boxes in today's banks, this system can be found also at Qasr al-Haj, Kabau (on the other road back to Jadu) and at Wazzan, a village to the west, just before the Tunisian border. Every morning, I am told, one member of the family goes to his family's cell to take the supply of food for the day. A *dallal* is traditionally appointed to see fair play, but in fact dishonesty is unknown. Bartering does, however, take place. As you examine the castle pay homage to the besieged Berbers during the second Turkish conquest of Nalut; they resisted the invaders on perilously little food or water for many months, then committed suicide, preferring death to dishonour. To the west of the castle you will find a mosque of equal age. Of its original five aisles, two have collapsed.

I can recommend you to stay in the small Hotel Nalut, which is perfectly clean and reasonably priced. It is the regular stopping-place for the scheduled bus service to Ghadames.

From Nalut to Sinawan is another 108 kms. Dry bushes provide the only relief in the arid plain, around which one senses, rather than sees, the outlines of mountains crouching like patient wild animals. Gazelles can occasionally be seen near here; their day's thirst is quenched by the few drops of dew they find on the desert plants; their hunger by tough thorns, or a patch of lichen, or wild broom.

Three villages make up the geographical location of Sinawan. As in other Berber towns, make for the castle, which in Sinawan consists of a wall and round tower, since the greater part of it fell into ruin long ago. Inside all is silent and desolate. One is aware of the distance that separates Sinawan from Europe (or even from Tripoli) in spirit even more than in space. Stand barefoot in the hot sand and resist the harsh magnificence of the desert if you can!

AWAY TO GHADAMES!

Moving on from the Berber castle, you come to the Turkish fort, where almost all of the houses of the Qasr al-Watani are situated. The waters of Sinawan have always been jealously guarded from Beduin marauders, and the more insidious enemy—spreading sand. To convey supplies of water to the oasis from the nearby hills, galleries (known in Sinawan as *saruth*) were excavated at the foot of the slopes. These *saruth* are of varying lengths, from a few yards to as many as three or four hundred; their roofs are either arched or flat, and their walls are covered with roughly-hewn stones. Water flows in small quantities from the *saruth*, through tiny vents, into a kind of reservoir, from which the irrigation channels issue. The flow of water is carefully controlled to eliminate waste. Don't be surprised at the extent of the 'qusbat' (watch-towers) around Sinawan, because the life of an oasis depends almost wholly on the security of its water supply, and Sinawan has been harassed by marauders for centuries. I am told that the water of Sinawan is unpleasantly brackish; but I was too thirsty to notice the taste—you may find it quite as refreshing as I did. The pools of this oasis reflect the brilliant blue sky, the shimmering green leaves of the trees, and the quick, rhythmic movements of the women and girls drawing water.

We can now look forward to being in Ghadames within six hours: 107 kms to Daraj and 103 further on to our destination. The track is bumpy and the weather stiflingly hot, but the desert is vibrant; the car miraculously moving on; and the mirage of Ghadames nearer every minute. You will often meet a mirage between Sinawan and Ghadames: it is a veil suspended beneath a vault of brilliant light—surely water! Yes, a lake extends from the middle distance away to the horizon—palms appear, a castle, a village . . . But it is all no more than a will o' the wisp from the *Thousand and one nights*, which should be your bedside book in Tripolitania.

AWAY TO GHADAMES!

At the 560th kilometre, the road descends rapidly, reminding us that we have been travelling at a height of some 1300 feet above sea-level. Below us is the district of Daraj (meaning 'steps').

At the 571st kilometre, turn off left for Tgutta, which is a cluster of palm-trees in the hollow of a wadi. Daraj, rather similar in character to Ghadames, is a collection of small dwellings within walls and bastions. You will see a hybrid Berber-Turkish castle and a Tuareg encampment. Now Daraj, which had fallen into economic decay, has been revived by employment in the oil industry and the new government tomato-canning factory. I spoke to the tall, bronzed director of the factory. He was optimistic about its contribution to the economy of western Libya, and justifiably, because the oasis is marvelously fertile, in spite of the great heat.

The women of Daraj plait palm-leaves into baskets and weave cloth for barakans. As at Ghadames, the corners of the roofs end in sharp points, supposedly to keep the devil away.

We are now travelling west, straight to Ghadames. On the right of the road at Bir Zugrar I saw 'meharists', the police who patrol the desert on fast pedigree camels. The mirage appears and reappears, the result of extreme aridity, since we are now on the edge of the Algerian 'erg', that vast sandy plain stretching across northern Africa. Shortly the triangle of the meeting-point of Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya will be encountered. Will it be a no-man's land, desolate and as barren as these dunes we are passing now, hour after hour? No: at the triangle you will reach the fertile oasis of Ghadames.

GHADAMES

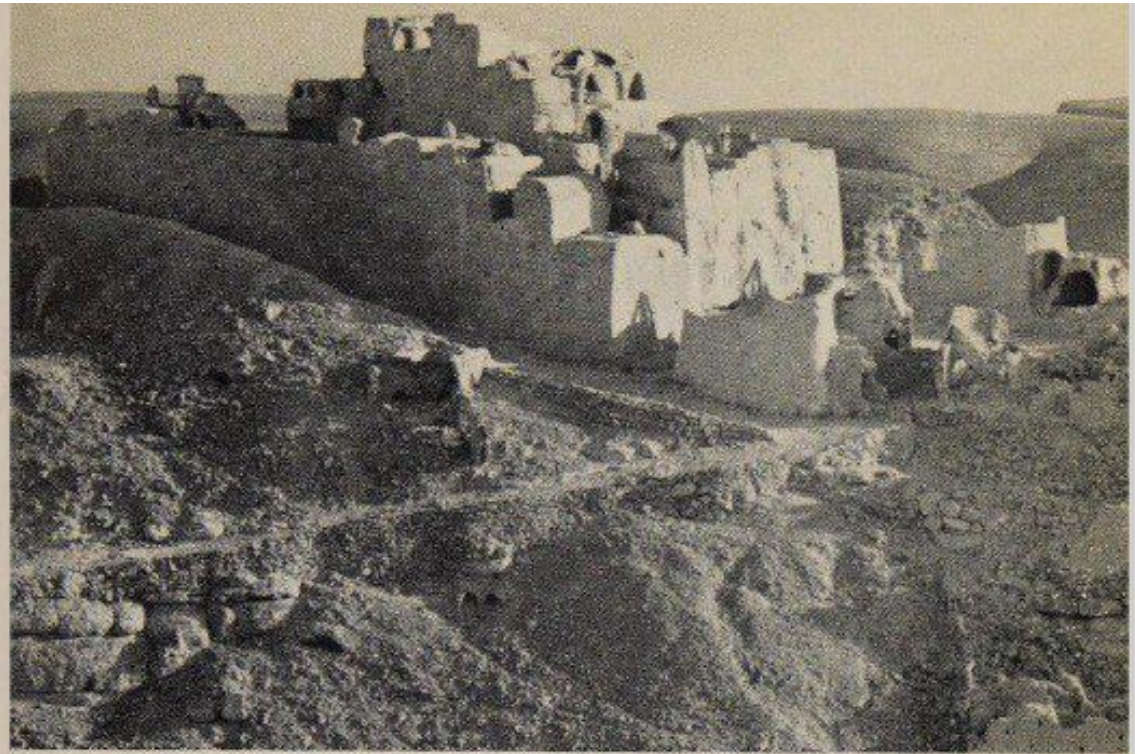
The first glimpse is all the more precious, when you climb to the peak of the last dune, because you realize that the long journey

AWAY TO GHADAMES!

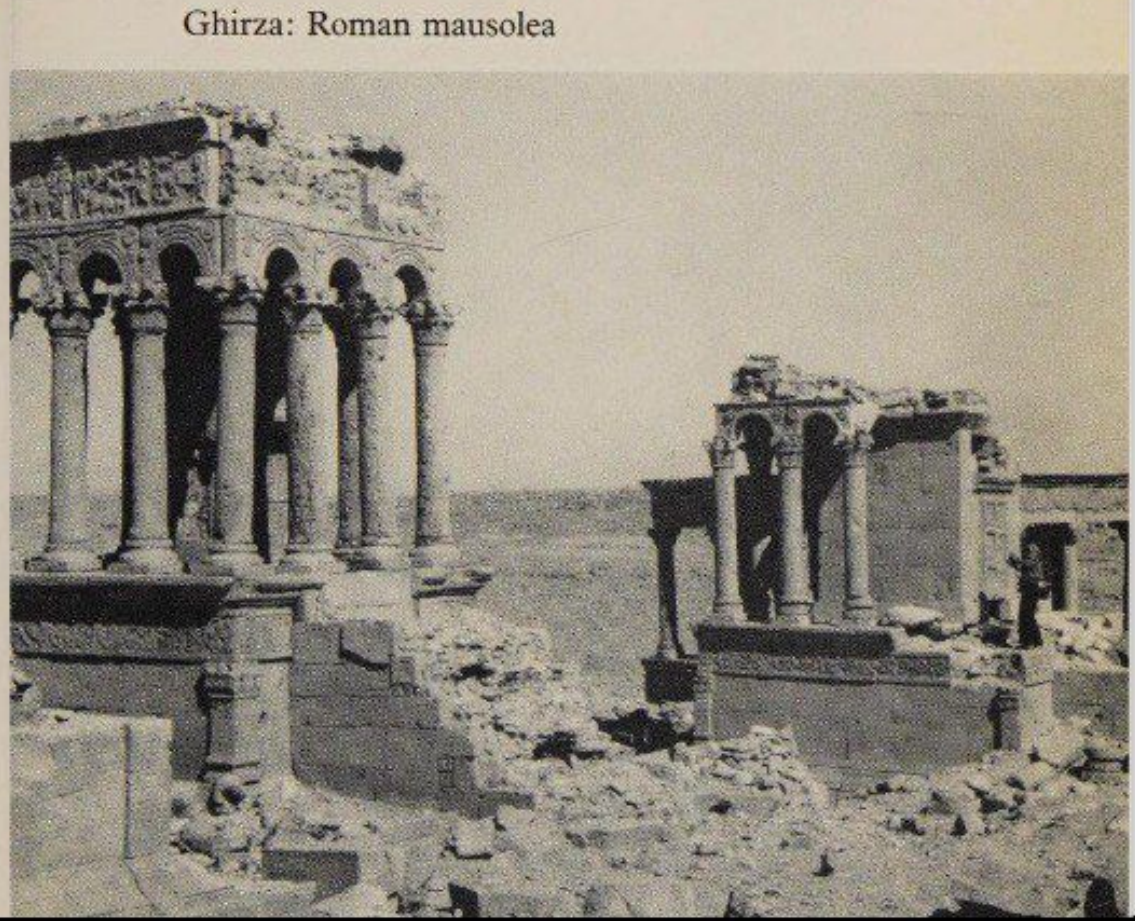
is nearly at an end, Ghadames lies a few kilometres away, a splash of bright green in a golden expanse of sand. Without the surrounding desert it would be ordinary; the sand without Ghadames would by now become menacing; but the conjunction raises your spirits to their highest point. You drive quickly on, exchanging the humming silence of the desert for the comparative thunder of normal town life. You ask for the *Hutail 'Ain al-Faras* (Mare's Spring Hotel), and when there walk through the cool portico to the reception desk and bar.

The hotel is named after the story of Sidi 'Uqba bin Naf'a (the seventh-century conqueror) who arrived in Ghadames after a long and arduous journey. He rode around desperately, seeking a spring. Suddenly, his mare beat its hoof on the ground and clear, fresh water gushed forth to save the Sidi's life. Unfortunately—as this is a guide and not a story—we have to admit that water was originally obtained at Ghadames by boring an artesian well in the remote past, and that the *ghadamsi* (as an inhabitant is known) embroidered a legend already known in Greek and Semitic mythology and the Egyptian deification of the Nile. The water of the 'Ain al-Faras is collected in a large rectangular basin on reaching the surface. A channel passes through a niche somewhat below the level of the ground, opening out in a vaulted grotto beneath the corner of a house in a square. Here, three men are employed day and night on a rota to measure the quantity of water passing through the canal. This is calculated by means of a small copper bucket with a hole in the bottom which acts as a water gauge. The water flows from the hole in the bucket in a certain number of minutes and for each bucket emptied, the *gaddas* (as he is called) makes a knot in a long cord of palm-leaves. He then refills the bucket. This primitive gauge was functioning during the Turkish period, and probably for many centuries before that.

The water supply is not paid for in money: the inhabitants



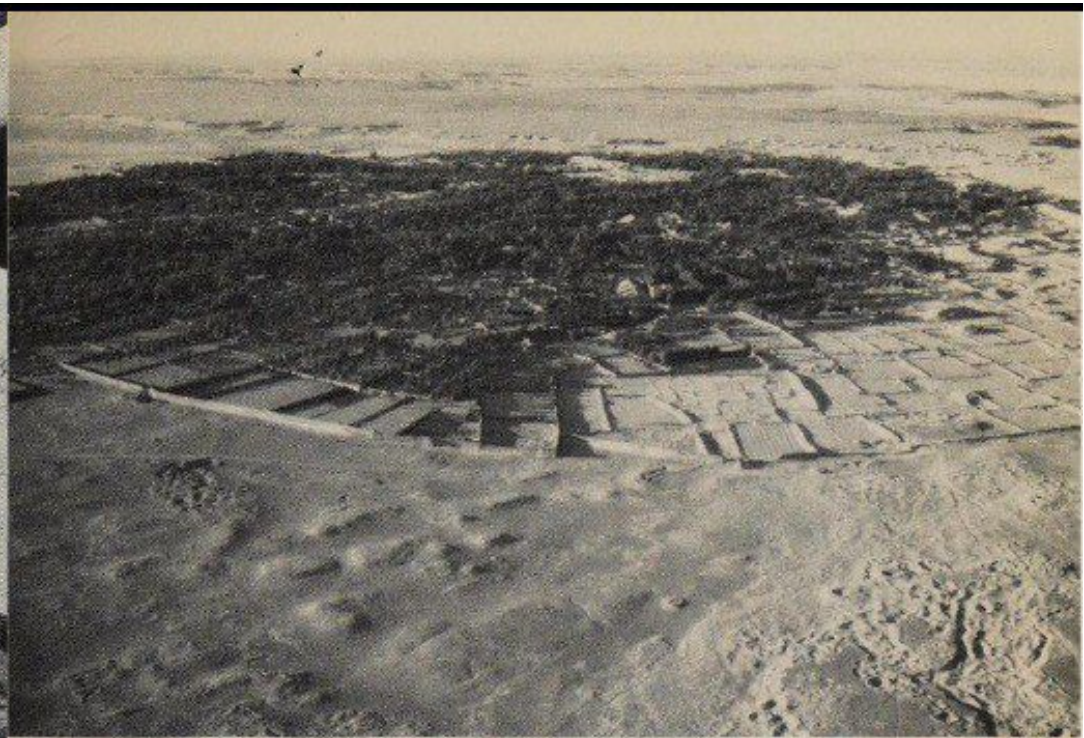
Nalut: castle



Ghirza: Roman mausolea

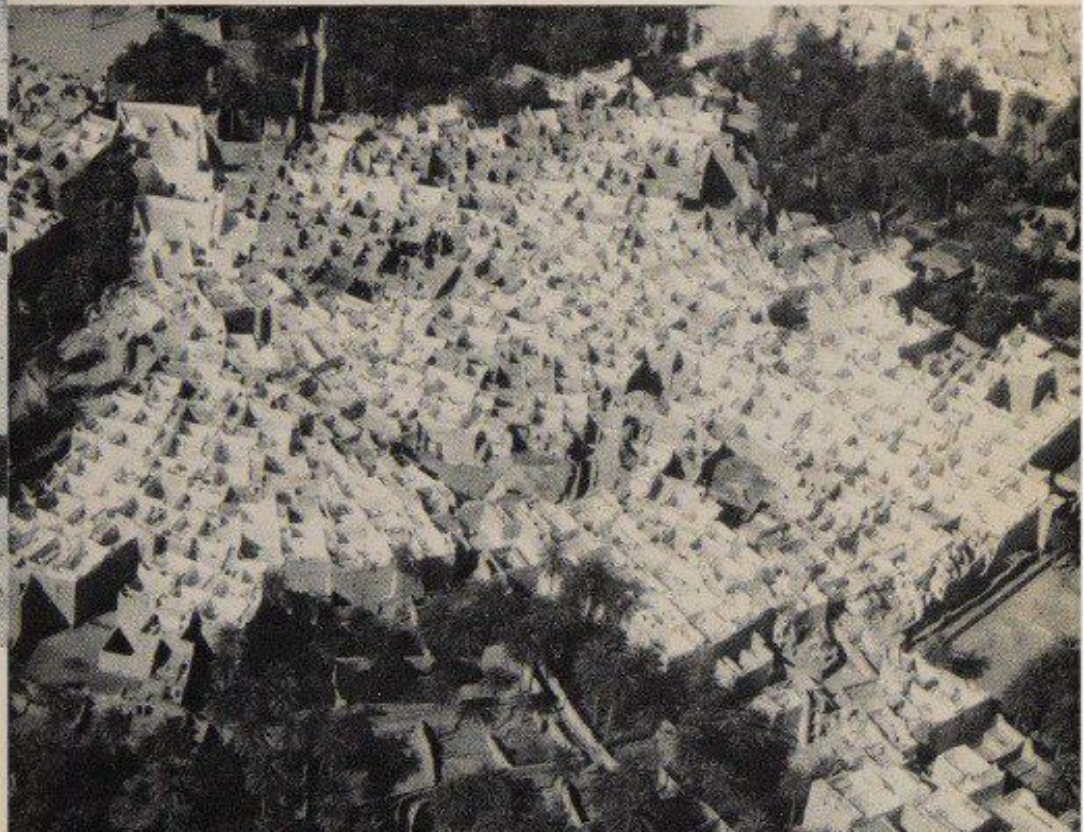


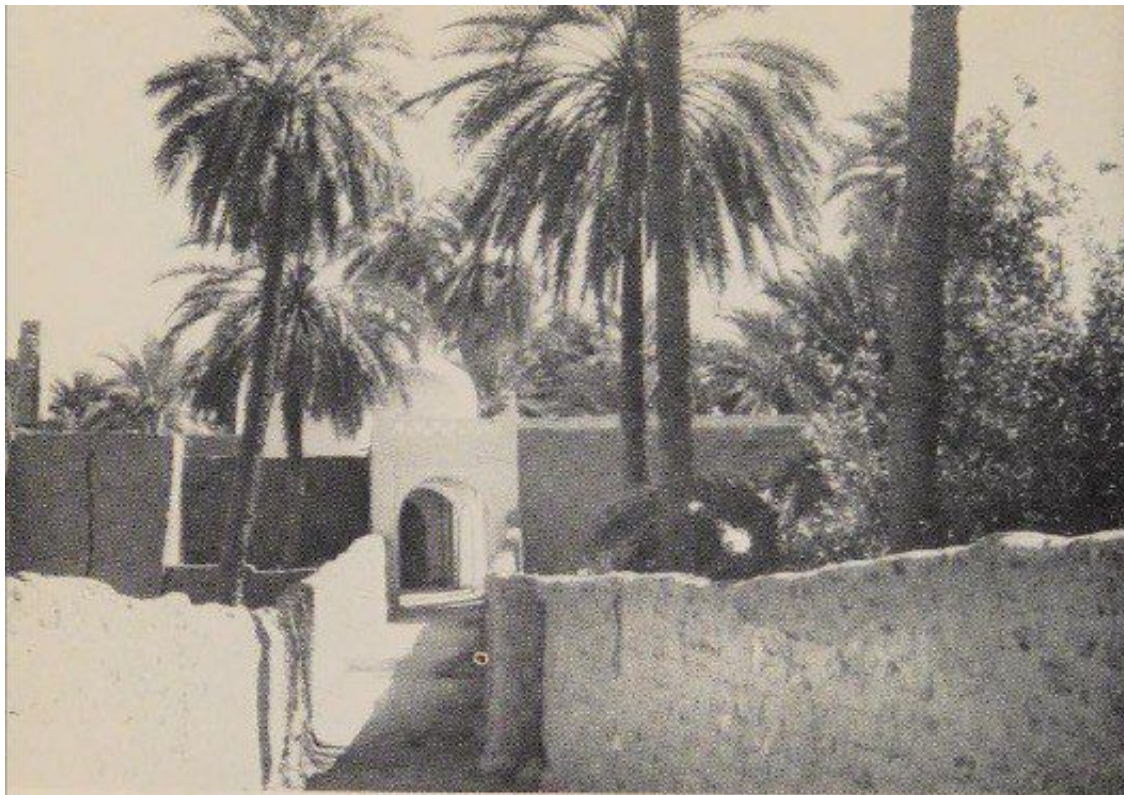
Kabau:
Berber
warehouse



Ghadames: aerial view of oasis and town

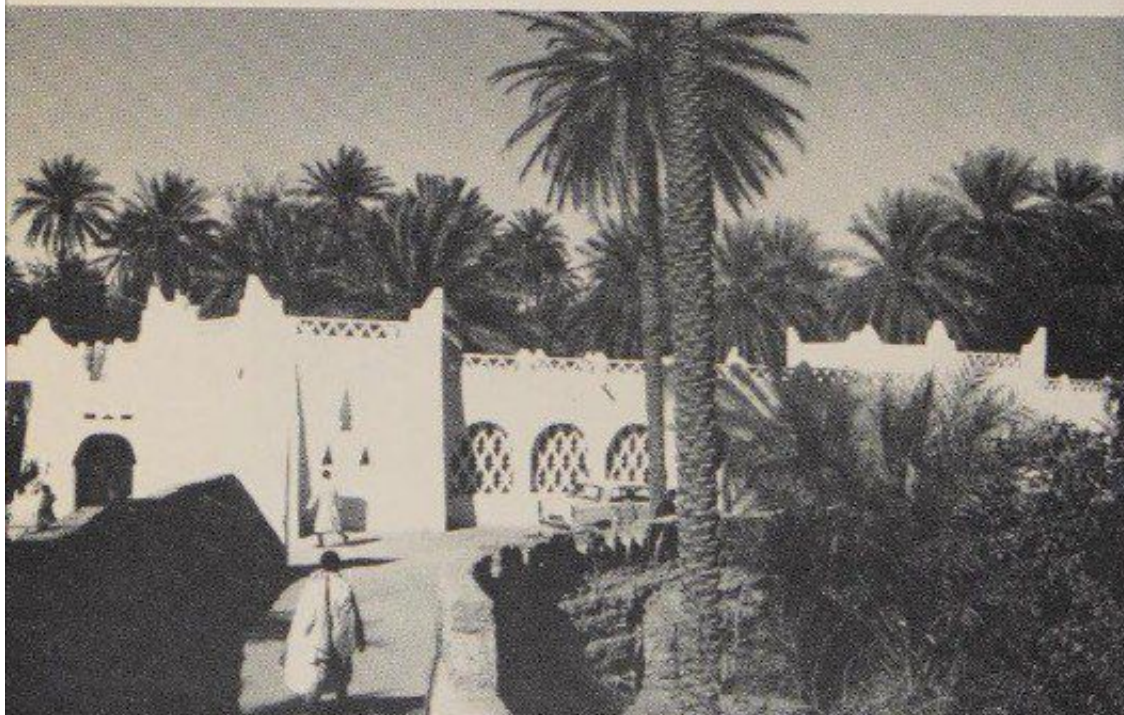
Ghadames: aerial view





Ghadames: entrance to underground city

Ghadames: Hotel Ain al-Faras



AWAY TO GHADAMES!

of Ghadames give the three men a ration of **barley, fruit and dates** in return for their services, and in cases of dispute a council of elders pronounce judgement. The measure of water allotted to each plot of land is the *darmisa* and when the supply is apportioned, the sluice gate is adjusted to allow the water to flow elsewhere.

You are now anxious to get back to the hotel for an appetizing meal that will taste all the better in the knowledge of your isolation from the nearest city—583 kilometres away. The hotel is literally covered by the long branches of palm-trees surrounding it: there are wonderful palms in the patio and, indeed, wherever you look. Visit the orchard: in season you can pick any amount of dates that grow here in huge golden clusters, and are called by the natives *dijlat an-nur*, or fingers of light. You will also find pomegranates, oranges, lemons, pistachionuts, locust-beans . . . The fertility of the soil in Ghadames is really amazing. It will be dark by now, and you will be pleasantly tired. But do wander a little into the oasis before going to bed, since Ghadames can be as beautiful at night as by day: the heat has subsided, a breeze begins to ruffle the palms, a muezzin calls the faithful to prayer, and silent shadowy figures take on a magic that will persuade you tomorrow that this evening stroll was no more than a dream.

Ghadames: the Second Day

You retired early after a long drive, so you will be up early to visit the **'subterranean' town, which is in reality a warren of covered streets.** If you are up early enough you may see the women fetching water; after early morning they shut themselves in their houses and can only be glimpsed on the roofs, which is their domain for the rest of the day. The men are similarly restricted to street-level during all but one period of the year.

In these dark passages, your eyes take some time to get

AWAY TO GHADAMES!

accustomed to the dimness. The air is hot and humid except in those stretches where the street emerges into the brilliant morning sun. If you have revelled in the smells of the covered market of Damascus, Ghadames will be a joy to you: here are the spices of the Orient, the smell of burning fat, musk, carpets and rugs, fruit, meat and animals. Underfoot is the bare earth, beaten down by numberless footsteps. The house-walls are of dried mud, whitewashed. You will see many doors, but very few windows. Often, the doors are surmounted by a straight or arc-shaped **architrave** of dark wood, with a graceful sculptured design. The heavy doors are made of a series of halved palm-trunks, with a plank to join them across the back at right angles. Remember when back in Tripoli to study the area devoted to Ghadames in the Castle Museum: it will bring back this atmosphere very clearly.

As you penetrate deeper into the labyrinth of narrow streets, the openings between arches allow perpendicular shafts of sunlight to enter, disclosing small kitchen garden plots enclosed by high walls, or a row of palms. Every so often we find a small portico with a monastic feeling, a niche, or a widening in the street. At most of the street corners, and on some of the house-lintels, you will find gazelle- and antelope-horns, to protect the buildings and their owners from the evil eye. As you move from brightness to darkness, so sounds become distinct and die away again. Sounds in the covered streets are softened as if in a world miles underground. You may hear the monotonous chanting of young boys in a Qur'anic school, intoning verses from the Qur'an that their teacher has written for them on their board of palm-wood. Both sides of the dark passages are lined with wide, white benches. Old men argue vigorously on one bench; you turn a corner and two girls in vivid hulies giggle.

The ending of the slave-trade through the Sahara wrecked the economy of Ghadames. Sand began to flow over the walls again

AWAY TO GHADAMES!

and the water-supply dwindled to a precarious level. Now, however, under the wise rule of His Majesty King Idris I, Ghadames is no longer dying, but reviving, and welcomes tourists to observe its resurgence.

The old slave markets of Ghadames were held in the Mulberry Square (for men), and the Little Mulberry Square (for women and girls). They functioned up to the end of the nineteenth century.

The mosques of Ghadames, like many others in Libya, have the true beauty of utter simplicity; their whiteness is a symbol of purity, and their plainness is an aesthetic relief from the European baroque and rococo styles which were contemporary with some of these architectural gems. If you are invited into the Sidi Badri mosque, you will appreciate the twisted columns and elegant capitals which might have come from the byzantine basilica which Justinian erected when Ghadames was an episcopal see. The exterior of Sidi Badri is also worthy of attention, as is the minaret, another example of modernity in taste. How Piet Mondriaan would have enjoyed its geometrical proportions and its straight lines!

The Turkish Residency has been converted into the Mudir's home; pointed Moorish arches enclose the inner court on three sides; on the fourth is a garden with an ancient well in the centre.

Immediately outside the oasis, wherever you look, you will see vast cemeteries, testifying to the grandeur of Ghadames in earlier times. The notion of death is not repugnant to the Muslim, who surrenders his will to Allah even in the present life. When he is dead his body is buried to face Mecca, and the winds blow over his grave for evermore. An Arab *hadith* or tradition, says 'The best tombs are those which show no trace of human pride'; in accordance with this admirable precept the tombs bear no names, the only evidence of the remains below

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being two stones, placed at the ends of a mound of earth. The territories of the dead are extended indefinitely, because Muslim tombs are inviolable: at Ghadames the cemeteries extend for five kilometres . . .

Look too for the 'asnam'—upstanding concrete cores of Roman tombs long stripped of their facing stones, which, with the columns and capitals of the mosque of Sidi Badri, are the only relics of classical antiquity still visible at Ghadames.

A Land Rover will take you outside the oasis of Ghadames to a tiny, picture-book oasis called Tumin, whose main industry is rush-weaving. We wandered around there for twenty minutes without seeing anyone at all—but then it was mid-day, and only the faintest breeze stirred the highest branches of the palms. Even sun-glasses cannot resist the dazzle of Tumin at noon.

From Tumin you can rejoin the track to Daraj for a kilometre or so to reach the ruined fortress, on the right. This is easily climbed and affords a dramatic view over Ghadames, the corners of Algeria and Tunisia, and, just below the fortress, tombs which are suspected to be very ancient—excavation is impossible of course, since tombs are sacred to Muslims.

If you still have time, ask to ascend to a terrace. The fire is here, and a little cupola—the family mosque, occasionally decorated with relics of ancestors. Rugs cover the floor of the terrace and here the women pass the day in the shade, looking after their children, cooking, and waiting for the return of their husbands from the markets of the north and south. At dinner-time oatmeal cakes are ground between two stones, and kus-kus may be prepared. This is made from any number of ingredients, but the more common are rice, potatoes, peas, and mutton or other meat, but pork, which is forbidden to Muslims. At dawn and at sunset all kneel down in the direction of Mecca and repeat their prayers. After that, an hour of pleasant gossip with the neighbours. Neighbours can be reached by a few steps up or

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down to the next wall; good neighbours can pass easily from terrace to terrace, and traverse the whole city like this, invisible from the ground level.

A world apart that you will never forget, even if you visit the larger oases of the Maghrib: the world of Ghadames.

Appendix I

DESERT TRAVEL

The routes in this guidebook involve three stretches of desert driving, by which I mean on non-asphalted surfaces. The easiest is the trip to Shumaikh ('Scemec' on the signpost at Beni Walid), which presents no problem to a car of the Volkswagen type. The other two: Ghirza, from Beni Walid, and Ghadames present difficulties of distance and terrain that make it imperative for you to travel accompanied by another vehicle; Land Rovers should be used on these journeys.

Before you set out

The car must be serviced before you leave Tripoli. Spare parts and a spare tyre are essential. Check your lights and take spare bulbs. Carry a full jerrican of petrol, spare oil, and the equivalent of a jerrican of drinking water for each passenger. Take food enough for double the length of time you expect to be off the main road. One of the drivers should have mechanical experience, and one desert-driving experience. Bring paper plates and tissue to avoid dish-washing and the wastage of water, which is your most precious possession. Pack a shovel and two planks for sanding out. A bucket could be useful for drawing water. A rope would be needed for that purpose, and for towing a sanded or broken-down vehicle. Toilet paper should be carried in large quantities since apart from its personal use, it is excellent for cooling bottled drinks (wrap several moistened layers around the bottle), wiping away perspiration, and cleaning windows.

A first-aid box should include scissors, bandage, zinc oxide

APPENDIX I

plaster, entero-vioforme, bicarbonate of soda, cream against sunburn (such as Nivea), aspirin and Dettol. If you are camping out or exploring the rocks, take a hypodermic syringe and anti-viper and anti-scorpion serum, but these are not necessary for the tourist. They should only be administered by someone medically qualified.

At the Last Town

Before leaving the asphalt road, rest. Replenish water supplies and buy more drinks, if available. Inform the police station there exactly where you are going and when you plan to be back. Of course you must call in again on the return journey to tell them of your safe return. Fill up with petrol and check tyres carefully. They should be deflated a little to increase traction.

In the Desert

The most common surface you will encounter has a washboard-ing appearance caused by the displacement of air as vehicles lift the sand. Salty areas do not usually suffer from washboarding because the salt draws the moisture from the air into the soil. On this type of track, which can also be caused by the weathering of shale and gypsum, try to avoid following the track of previous vehicles, since the holes will have become deeper than is apparent from the surface. Leave the track if possible at these places, but do not risk becoming sanded at the side. Keep in low gear and drive as slowly as possible without risking being sanded in soft patches, since if you drive too fast the abnormal bumping will eventually damage the shock absorbers. If the vehicle appears to be bogging down, reverse and rush the patch.

Do not drive on any surface but an asphalted road at night. The dangers are obvious; desert driving is quite enough of a mental strain by day. At night you cannot possibly judge the

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terrain accurately enough to avoid problems. This warning applies to ghibli and sandstorm conditions, during which you should stop the car until visibility improves.

If the Worst Happens

Despite all these precautions, you may still encounter mechanical trouble or lose your way. The first rule of the desert is not to panic; there is certainly no need to panic if you have followed the instructions I have mentioned so far. The second rule is to remain close to your vehicle all the time, and inside it during the heat of the day, since cars are easier to spot than people, and if anyone sees a parked vehicle in the desert, he will assume (often rightly) that help is needed and come to the rescue without any signals. The third rule is to check your vehicle and supplies: ensure there is no leak in the petrol-tank or in the water-cans. Park the vehicle on the highest ground you can find to aid observation. Drink enough water to avoid dehydration, but do not waste a drop. Lastly, stay calm because—remember? you have informed the police and they will be out to find you!

Appendix II

USEFUL INFORMATION

When to Come

The climate of Tripolitania is determined by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, and the Sahara Desert to the south. The northern coastal strip is naturally dominated by the Mediterranean, getting rainfall in December and January. The Western Mountains have quite a good record for rain, and a consequently fertile soil. Tripoli also enjoys some rain, but Mizda and Beni Walid on the edge of the desert receive less than 60mm. a year. Snow last fell in Tripolitania in February 1949, causing great hardship to men and livestock. Fog is almost unknown. The average relative humidity is 55%, misleading as a figure because a ghibli can cause a sudden drop to 10% when it begins and a sudden increase to 90% when it ends.

The general opinion is that April and May are the best months for touring Tripolitania, with October, June and November (which can be rainy) close runners-up. The winter months are variable: 1965-6 was brilliant, 1964-5 occasionally wet and overcast. The summer months register an average high of some 85° and an average low of 71° Fahrenheit. The table shows the average daily temperature in Tripoli, with those of London for comparison. Highs are given in bold type, and lows in parentheses.

	J	F	M	A	M	J
TRIPOLI	61 (47)	63 (49)	67 (52)	72 (57)	76 (61)	81 (67)
	J	A	S	O	N	D
	85 (71)	86 (72)	85 (71)	80 (65)	73 (57)	64 (49)

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	J	F	M	A	M	J
LONDON	44(35)	45(35)	51(47)	56(40)	63(45)	69(51)
	J	A	S	O	N	D
	73(55)	72(54)	67(51)	58(44)	49(39)	45(36)

How to Come

The visitor to Tripoli will normally arrive by air. Numerous airlines use Idris Airport, which is on the edge of the pre-desert, 27 kilometres from Tripoli. If you wish to continue to Benghazi, the co-capital of Libya, or Sebha, in the south, you will fly by Kingdom of Libya Airlines. KLA uses modern Caravelles, and though it began operation as recently as 1 October 1965, the national airline has already built up an excellent reputation.

If you come to Tripoli for the annual Tripoli International Fair, held usually in February or March for three weeks, be prepared for a pleasant surprise of reductions in your air fares of up to 25%; evidence of attendance at the Fairground in the form of your entrance-ticket will secure this discount.

Passports and Visas

You will need a current passport, and a Libyan visa, which is valid for thirty days.

The Libyan Embassy in the U.S.A. is at 1611, Upshur Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20011.

For the United Kingdom, 58 Princes Gate, London, S.W.7; for France, 18 rue Kepler, Paris 16; for the Federal Republic of Germany, Koblenzerstr. 155, Bonn; for Italy, Via Nomentana 365, Roma.

Customs and Currency Formalities

As usual, all luggage entering the country is liable to inspection

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and most is in theory liable to customs duty, but tourists are in fact exempt from payment on used personal effects, and may import the usual cigarettes, spirits and perfume.

An International Certificate of Vaccination against smallpox is essential, but no other health certificate is required unless you are entering Libya from an infected area.

Currency is limited to £10 sterling and £20 Libyan sterling per person, but there is no restriction on travellers' cheques, letters of credit, or money orders. All currency in whatever form must be declared on the Exchange Control Form, which is filled up in duplicate before arrival at the border. One copy is retained by the Customs, and the other is returned to you for surrender on leaving Libya. There are no other formalities, except registration with the Immigration Department within three days of arrival, which is done by the hotel at which you stay.

Driving your own Car

Possession of a valid licence for your own country automatically entitles you to drive anywhere in Libya for a period up to three months. The licence must, however, be registered at the Road Transport Headquarters situated beside the King's Palace.

International traffic signs are in use in Libya, and the roads are asphalted on every itinerary in this guidebook apart from the stretch on the Ghadames route beyond Tiji, and the tracks south of Beni Walid and Mizda.

Car repairs and maintenance are best done in Tripoli, but I have used repair shops in Homs and Misurata with complete satisfaction. If you should be stranded anywhere, have patience. The Libyan is not only interested and willing to help with your car problems, he often has technical experience and will put you right within a few minutes of stopping to help. Such kindness does not, of course, permit you to start a long drive without

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necessary spare parts, at least one spare tyre and a full jerrican. If your car needs water, remember that the Libyan summer can be very hot, and provide supplies accordingly. Cold drinks are available at most towns and villages you are likely to visit. Buy them there directly from the refrigerator. After three hours in a baking car, bottles you take with you will be warm, to say the least! This does not mean that ample supplies of drinking water should not be taken. Bearing in mind the need for a full spare jerrican, you need have no worries about petrol. Supplies are always ample, and cost is very reasonable.

Car-Hire and Taxis

Your hotel will direct you to the nearest car-hire agency. Hertz can be contacted at the Libya Palace Hotel. The Lion's and Avis Rent-a-Car services are in the Majrisi Building, Shar'a an-Nasr (Tel. 38567 and 37066 respectively); the Volkswagen Car Hire in Shar'a Damascus; Mike's Car Hire at 183, Jaddat Istiqlal (Tel. 31599). Guided tours by taxi are arranged by N.A.M.T.E., P.O. Box 253, Tripoli, who cover the city in half a day, the city and Tripoli oasis, with Suq al-Jum'a and Tajura, in a full-day trip. N.A.M.T.E. can also arrange trips to Garian and Yafran (day), Sabratha (day or half-day), and Leptis Magna (day). Their charges are liable to fluctuation, but in March 1966 the cost for three persons on the full-day tour of Tripoli and environs was L£5 each, and on the full-day tour to Leptis (taking seven hours, with packed lunch) the cost was L£8 each.

Private taxis will run you anywhere in Tripolitania; they are large and comfortable and not at all expensive. Rates within Tripoli are 25 piastres plus 1 piastre for every 200 metres. For up to four people, the inclusive return fares outside Tripoli city (subject to bargaining) are as follows:

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		L£
Suq al-Jum'a and Tajura	Half-day	5
Zawia and Sabratha	Day or half-day	7
Zwara and Abu Kammash (for Farwa)	Day	14
Leptis Magna and Homs	Day	14
Zliten and Misurata	2 days	19
(overnight Homs or Misurata)		
Tarhuna and Beni Walid	1½ days	18
Garian and Yafran	Day	15
Jadu and Nalut	2 days	25
(overnight Nalut)		

The condition of the track from Nalut to Ghadames is not considered suitable for these modern taxis.

Gharries and Buses

The horse-carriage, or 'gharry', is giving way in Tripoli as it is everywhere else to the mechanized vehicle. Walk if you love walking, drive a car if you must, but try the gharries at least once during your stay. My own home is far enough for the noise of the car-engines to be lost, but every so often through the open window we can still hear the pleasant jingling bells of a gharry. The gharry-drivers are cheerful men with a love of horses and often with the gift of repartee. Enjoy a drive with them.

There is one sure way of mingling with Libyans long enough to get to know them, and that is to travel out of Tripoli by bus. The buses are usually crowded, animated, and full of the laughter of a people on holiday; I ruefully compared the gaiety of the bus I took from Tripoli to Garian with the resigned, blank faces in the London Transport buses I used. Food is shared out willingly, conversations are begun and ended in roars of laughter, and each new passenger is greeted with cordiality.

The following prices and times are correct at the time of writing, but you should check them at the Central Bus Station (on the far side of the city wall) to make sure.

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<i>Bus departures from Tripoli</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Price (single in piastres)</i>
Zwara & Zawia	Daily: 8; 10.30; 1; 2.30; 4; 6	35 (23 to Sabratha)
Misurata & Zliten	Daily: 7.30; 9.30; 11.30; 1.30; 3.30; 5	65 (42 to Leptis)
Garian (Western Mountains)	Daily: 8; 10.30; 1; 3; 5.30	30
Beni Walid via Tarhuna	Daily: 3; 8.30	50
Ghadames & Jadu	Sundays: 7.30 a.m. overnighing at Nalut and reaching Ghadames the second night at 6.	L£2.150

While touring by road in Tripolitania, you will see at intervals the very attractive railway stations dating from the Italian colonial period. While trains no longer run, you might care to examine specimens of this architectural style, combining elegance and utility. Lines ran south from Tripoli to Gurgi, Gargaresh, and Azizia (49 kms); west to Zanzur, Zawia, Sabratha, and Zwara (117 kms); and east to Tajura (21 kms).

Luggage and Clothing

The airport bus transports you free of charge from Idris Airport to your hotel, with all your baggage. Travel as light as possible, since in a hot climate even a light bag can seem heavy. Clothing will depend on the season, but you will need a light overcoat in late autumn and winter, and a cardigan for the evenings in spring and summer. Otherwise, European clothing will be sufficient for winter, and light to tropical outfits for the rest of the year. Women should avoid wearing slacks and shorts except on the beaches. Sun-glasses are essential against the glare; sunhats are desirable except in winter.

The Language non-Problem

If you like to pick up another language as you go along I have included some useful phrases that a tourist in Tripolitania might use. If you feel everyone should speak English, like you do,

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there is no problem in Tripoli, since most Libyans who cannot speak English are learning very willingly! The 'language problem' only exists where there is no interest in co-operation or hospitality: you won't find it a problem at all in Tripoli, and even in the villages of the interior schools are being built so quickly under the Five-Year Development Plan that the chances are you will be greeted in English if you pull up to ask a question. So a knowledge of the local language is not as essential in Libya as it is, for instance, in Spain or France.

The official language of Libya is Arabic. The largest group of foreigners is the Italian group, with the English-speaking communities third. Tripoli has a population of 230,000, of whom 21,000 are Italians, and a further 13,000 or so Americans and British. The minorities include important Greek and Maltese communities (the Maltese have been here since the time of the Knights of St. John). As the language of commerce, the English language is, however, important out of all proportion to the size of the English-speaking community, and you will readily be understood in Tripoli if you speak only English.

The Arabic spoken in Tripoli is not classical Arabic: it is a dialect, called Tripolitanian. While it would take you a great deal of time to master this dialect, a few words will get you a very long way. Some useful words and phrases are given in this guidebook. If you want to learn more words, and even sentences, get a copy of *Basic Tripolitanian Arabic*, a manual by C. P. Bradburne, in 2 volumes, from Mobil Oil Libya Ltd. at 150 East 42nd St., New York 17, or their Tripoli office. The system of Arabic transliteration used throughout this guide is the *Uniform Procedure for Arabic Transliteration* (Tripoli, 1963).

Pronounce the consonants as in English ('kh' is Scottish final 'ch'), and the vowels as in Italian.

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Useful Words and Phrases

Yes	<i>Āywa</i>
No	<i>Lā</i>
Please	<i>Min fādlak</i>
Thank you	<i>Shūkran</i>
Don't mention it	<i>'Āfwan</i>
Sorry	<i>Mut'āssif</i>
How are you?	<i>Kaif hāluk?</i>
Well	<i>Kwais or Bāhi or Al-hāmdu lillāh (Praise be to God)</i>
Good morning	<i>Sabāh al-khair</i>
Good morning (reply)	<i>Sabāh an-nur</i>
Good evening	<i>Masā' al-khair</i>
Goodbye!	<i>Fi amān illāh</i>
Goodbye! (reply)	<i>Ma'as-salāma</i>
Hullo	<i>Āhlan wa sāhlan</i>
Tell me	<i>Gūlli</i>
This	<i>Hāda</i>
That	<i>Hadāk</i>
Have you?	<i>'Induk?</i>
How much?	<i>Giddāsh?</i>
A little	<i>Buss shwāyya</i>
Too much	<i>Hālba</i>
Expensive	<i>Ghālī</i>
Also	<i>Kadālik</i>
I should like . . .	<i>Nibbi . . .</i>
What is that?	<i>Shīnu hāda?</i>
Where is . . .?	<i>Wain . . .?</i>
On your left	<i>'Āla yisārak</i>
On your right	<i>'Āla yamīnak</i>
Straight on	<i>Gidāmak</i>
Go!	<i>Īmshi!</i>
Come!	<i>Ta'āla!</i>

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Bring me . . .	<i>Jīb li . . .</i>
Money	<i>Flūs</i>
Petrol	<i>Benzīn</i>
Oil	<i>Zait</i>
Car	<i>Sayyāra</i>
Hotel	<i>Hutail</i>
Market	<i>Sūq</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Titkāllim blinglīzi?</i>
Do you speak Arabic?	<i>Titkāllim blārabi?</i>
Tea	<i>Shāhi</i>
Coffee	<i>Gāhwa</i>
Milk	<i>Halīb</i>
Sugar	<i>Sūkkar</i>

Numbers

1	<i>Wāhad</i>	6	<i>Sitta</i>	15	<i>Khamsatāsh</i>
2	<i>Itnīn</i>	7	<i>Sāb'a</i>	20	<i>'Āshrīn</i>
3	<i>Thalātha</i>	8	<i>Tamānya</i>	50	<i>Khamsīn</i>
4	<i>Ārb'a</i>	9	<i>Tīs'a</i>	100	<i>Mīa</i>
5	<i>Khāmsa</i>	10	<i>'Āshara</i>	1000	<i>Alf</i>

Days of the Week

Sunday	<i>Yaum al-āhad</i>
Monday	<i>Yaum al-ītnīn</i>
Tuesday	<i>Yaum ath-thalāth</i>
Wednesday	<i>Yaum al-īrb'a</i>
Thursday	<i>Yaum al-khamīs</i>
Friday	<i>Yaum al-jūm'a</i>
Saturday	<i>Yaum as-sabt</i>

(If you work out '*Suq al-jūm'a*' from this vocabulary, you will see that it means 'Market (of) Friday'.)

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In sha' Allah is appended to any sentence referring to actions or events in the future, since a Muslim regards such predictions as presumptuous in mere human beings—the future is known to God alone. Hence, you must say for 'I'm going to take a look at Sabratha tomorrow'— '*Ghūdwa bi-nīmshi 'āla Sabrāta in sha' Allah*'.

Conversion of Weights and Measures (approximations)

Length

0.3 metres	1 foot
0.9 metres	1 yard
1.0 metre	3.28 feet
1,609.0 metres	1 mile
1 kilometre	0.62 miles
8 kilometres	5 miles
10 kilometres	6.2 miles

Weight

100 grams	3½ ozs.
250 grams	8 ozs.
1 kilogram	2.2 lbs.

Liquids

1 litre	0.22 gall. (Imp.)
10 litres	2.2 galls.

Area

1 hectare	2.47 acres
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Conversion of Currency

One **Libyan pound**, which is the unit of currency, is divided into a thousand **milliemes** and a hundred **piastres**.

Currency notes, issued by the Bank of Libya, are £10, £5,

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£1, 500 milliemes (often referred to as 'half a pound'), 250 milliemes, 100 milliemes and 50 milliemes.

Coins range from 100 milliemes (10 piastres = 2/-) to 50 milliemes, 10, and 5.

The **Libyan pound** represents in sterling £1
and in U.S. dollars \$2.80

Time

When it is 12 noon Greenwich Mean Time, it is 2 p.m. in Tripoli; the same time standard is prevalent throughout the Kingdom of Libya.

Official Holidays in Libya

All religious holidays, including the entire holy month of Ramadan, are movable, depending upon the sightings of the moon. The principal holidays fall on the first three days of the Islamic month Shawwal, and on the ninth-twelfth days of the month Dhu 'l-Hija. The Islamic New Year is the first day of the month Muharram. Only the following secular holidays are fixed:

March 12	King's Birthday
March 22	Anniversary of the Arab League
April 26	Unification of Libya
August 9	Armed Forces Day
November 21	United Nations Resolution Day
December 24	Independence Day

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